

**AN ANALYSIS OF MONTALE'S WORLDS OF POETRY AND THEIR
DISSOLUTION FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF DEIXIS AND
HETEROGLOSSIA.**

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is that of pointing out a linguistic approach to the analysis of Montale's poems and their spatio-temporal, inter-personal, stylistic and thematic dissolution. In the first four chapters attention will be centred on understanding what is deixis and on analyzing the deictic organization in Montale's texts. Through such an analysis it will be possible to prove that Montale's poems project worlds of poetry that can be re-inhabited linguistically in order to study their spatio-temporal co-ordinates and their opening to a zone which will be referred to as *limen* and which functions as the door-passage to the metaphysical dimension and, thus, to a dissolution of the traditional three-dimensional concepts of space and time. The study of deixis will also help us understand the dynamics of the relationship between voices and narratorial roles within such poetic worlds. In the last three chapters, the examination of Montale's language from the point of view of heteroglossia shows us that the attempt to create a unifying poetic language that may lead to a truthful reading of reality fails. The traditional poetic language present in Montale's poetry of the first three collections slowly opens to the unofficial language of the street and the marketplace. It will be claimed that the more monological language, which characterizes Montale's first three books, dissolves so as to embrace a different variety of available social languages in order to express disintegration of a society, of a tradition and, partly, of the poet's ideology through social and self satire.

Once the spatio-temporal dimensions and inter-personal relationships present within Montale's poetry have been examined, it will become clear that they are repeated constantly throughout Montale's first three books. Whilst in his first season of production the Montalian voice was incessantly looking for an escape from the spatio-temporal-historical 'rete / che ci stringe' ('In limine', vv.15-16), in the second period of production he cannot but accept the here-and-now dimension as the only available one: the spatio-temporal feeling

of claustrophobia typical of the first poetic season turns into complete closeness which is accompanied by the loss of hope in the metaphysical dimension. Thus, the dissolution of the spatio-temporal deictic system, which might have brought the poetic voice to freedom and salvation, is no longer a possibility for either the addressee or the speaking voice who ceases searching for such a salvation. In this sense, dissolution of the Montalian worlds, intended as individual poem-realities, can be thought more generally as dissolution of his macro-text, of his universe of poetry which from 'In limine' had included an ontological and soterial poetic project.

Despite the general disintegration present within Montale's poetic production, on the whole his poetry stands together as a coherent universe. His linguistic and ontological project may fail and this is admitted by the poet himself. What the poet has striven to hold together in search of a unitary concept of reality, has finally come apart. Nevertheless, as Montale himself claims, he has really written 'un solo libro' ('Ho scritto un solo libro', 1975) and this will be proved linguistically in the concluding chapter through some final considerations on the function of certain deictic signs and metaphors throughout his books.

For John and Gianluca

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has been written by the undersigned and does not represent the work of any other person.

Rossella Riccobono

INTRODUCTION

0.1 How does Montale conceive poetry?

This study of Montale's poetry originates from both my affinity and deep love for poetry as a literary genre and my interest in the application of linguistic tools to the analysis and better understanding of literary texts. During the years which I have spent researching and writing this project, I have become quite familiar with Montale's worlds of poetry and fond of his voice and poetic affirmations. It is both with the love of the disciple for her 'maestro' and the detached eye of the researcher and critic that I have endeavoured to carry out my linguistic research into Montale's texts. This has allowed me to reach a close relationship with his language and *tout court* with his poetic outlook of the world, without losing sight of 'quel sentimento antropocentrico' without which Montale's poetry, and probably anybody's poetry, loses meaning.¹ As a matter of fact, on delving deeply into his poetic language I have always reached the same conclusions, i.e. that the real core of Montale's poems is always and ultimately man with his sense of 'inadattamento' within a reality which is refractory and with which he cannot ever come to terms.²

Montale's poetic history (from *Ossi di seppia* until *Diario Postumo*) indeed is, progressively and in different ways, the story of a *maladjusté* within his society. In an interview in 1951, the poet explains that the source of his poetic inspiration derived from his feeling of disharmony with the surrounding reality.³ Later in 1962 in another interview, Montale connects poetry with the word 'crisis' once again in stressing that

ogni grande poesia nasce da una crisi individuale di cui il poeta può anche non essere consapevole. Ma più che crisi (parola ormai sospetta) parlerei di una insoddisfazione, di un vuoto interno che l'espressione raggiunta, provvisoriamente, colma.⁴

Real poetry then, in Montale's view, stems from a spiritual difficulty.⁵ But, what does Montale refer to when he talks about poetry? It is important to clarify it at once. Poetry is not simply and always what is produced in verses: in this sense the poet partly erases the line that divides poetry and prose as genres by recognizing poetry, real poetry, as a component which can be present or absent in both.⁶ The Review which Montale wrote in 1935 on Marcel Raymond's *De Baudelaire au Surréalisme* contains some statements which can help shed a light on Montale's concept of poetry. In commenting on Raymond's analysis of eighty years of French poetry, Montale gives particular emphasis to Baudelaire's new sense of poetry and the identification of two lines of poetic expression which originate from Baudelaire's experience: 'la prima è quella degli artisti e porta a Mallarmé e a Valéry, la seconda conduce a Rimbaud ed oltre, ed è quella dei veggenti' (*Sulla poesia*, p.376). This new poetry, to which Montale himself feels affiliated, is described as 'poesia che non è più espressione ma rivelazione; affermazione dell'"universale analogia"; irrompere di un misticismo artistico essenzialmente conoscitivo che tenderà in ultimo alla distruzione del concetto stesso dell'arte' (*ibidem*, p.376).⁷ The components of what Montale calls 'real poetry' seem to be two: visionary powers combined with a poetic language, to which Montale himself refers as 'lo stile totale' ('Stile e tradizione', *Auto da fé*, p.11); an alliance 'del santo e del *parfait chimiste*' (*Sulla poesia*, p.378). This seems to be also Montale's project for his poetry. In 'Intervista immaginaria' Montale explains his intentions as a poet (which he declares were all *a posteriori*):

Ubbidii a un bisogno di espressione musicale. Volevo che la mia parola fosse più aderente di quella degli altri poeti che avevo conosciuto. Più aderente a che? Mi pareva di vivere sotto a una campana di vetro, eppure sentivo di essere vicino a qualche cosa di essenziale. Un velo sottile, un filo appena mi separava dal *quid* definitivo. L'espressione assoluta sarebbe stata la rottura di quel velo, di quel filo: una esplosione, la fine dell'inganno del mondo come rappresentazione. Ma questo era un limite irraggiungibile. (*Sulla poesia*, p.565)

Le parfait chimiste, which Montale admires in Baudelaire, is what Montale hopes to become: his project is to reach the 'absolute expression' in his poetry, a goal which he always doubted he could reach, hence the pessimistic persisting of the 'inganno del mondo' ('Del resto la campana di vetro persisteva intorno a me, ed ora sapevo che non si sarebbe mai infranta', *ibidem*, p.566) and his surrender to reality in the second season of his poetic activity.

Real poetry, then, entails absolute expression, visionary powers and a personal-existential difficulty at its origin; real poetry can be found in both the poetic genre, in the strict sense, and in prose. As a matter of fact, Montale emphasizes a strong relationship between prose and poetry, which are the *recto* and *verso* of the same artistic experience.⁸ It has already been stated that Montale considers his poetic production as a need to express, along with other aspects, the musical rhythm which is intrinsic to his language. Music is indeed a strong component of Montale's poetry, so much that when interviewed the poet does not fail to use musical metaphors when commenting on his own production.⁹ Furthermore, he claims an interdependence, in modern times, between the languages of different arts: not only poetry and music, but all arts:

si noti che il poeta nuovo [...] è poi tutt'altro che autonomo nella definizione della propria arte, e accetta prestiti vistosi dalle altre arti, le quali ne accettano altrettanti dall'arte di lui, la poesia' ('Parliamo dell'ermetismo', *Sulla poesia*, p.560).¹⁰

However, out of other arts in Montale's poetry the musical component seems to be the one which runs parallel with most of his production, with various changes of tone and timbre. The accompaniment of music 'in sordina' to Montale's poetry is present from the experimental 'Accordi' (written after 'Meriggiare pallido e assorto' and before 1920) which were only published for the first time in 1963, to 'Musica sognata' (1923) published only in the Gobetti edition of *Ossi* (1925), up to 'Piccolo testamento' (1953). For Montale the musical element in poetry is so important that in his essay on T.S. Eliot he acclaims the poet as one of the greatest contemporary poets and above all a poet-musician. One of the skills which Montale seems to praise in Eliot is the rich presence of different styles in his poetry:

In Eliot troviamo l'ironia, il sarcasmo, l'invettiva. [...] In lui la parola prosastica convive accanto a quella aulica, il tono diventa lirico per accensione interiore, non già perché obbedisca alle leggi di un metronomo. Eliot giunge spesso al canto dal recitativo, al tono più alto dal tono più parlato che possa darsi. È soprattutto [...] un poeta-musicista [...] e non è mai o quasi mai [...] un neo-classico. È questa la sua maggiore modernità... ('Invito a T. S. Eliot, *Sulla poesia*, p.463)

The interesting issue which emerges from his essay dedicated to Eliot is Montale's taste for a musically heteroglossic kind of poetry, as Cary puts it, whose [Montale's] 'model idea is a dramatic expressiveness based upon the whole gamut of significant human experience, open to all senses, moods, faculties, "genres," [sic] conditions'

(Cary 1993, p.247). It is in this sense that Montale's poetry is, and all good poetry should be, open to an inter-change with other artistic fields.

However, whilst commenting on the new poets of the avant-garde in 1962, Montale praises their skilful writing technique, perhaps with a pinch of irony, but raises his doubt on the real value of their experiments: 'Forse siamo in una stagione molto fortunata. O forse in una stagione infelice, in cui v'è un livello tecnico molto alto, ma al quale non corrisponde poi nulla di importante' ('Queste le ragioni del mio lungo silenzio', *Sulla poesia*, p.593). The difficulty from which their poetry originates is only decorative and their language is an experimental *collage* of different genres and languages which give birth to a revolutionary movement which brings with it nothing but itself. Montale claims that the 'new poetry', in whose ambit his poetry is also included, reflects modern society in all its aspects.¹¹ It is necessary, however, for poetry to be able to overcome its environment in order to go beyond the particular and raise itself to a more universal level 'perché allora è una presa di posizione verso l'umanità intera' (*ibidem*, p.594). In this sense, the poet and poetry have a moral role in society (*ibidem*, p.594). But modern society seems to have lost the sense of the work of art and literature, poetry or any form of art are no longer produced with man in mind, but as part of an industrial market. A book, a collection of poems, a picture are no longer works of art, but industrial products which follow the industrial laws and times.¹²

It is clear by now what is Montale's concept of poetry: a concept of art which is liberating for somebody who socially originates from the middle-bourgeoisie. Once his concept of what poetry is has been clarified, it is also easier to understand his feeling of *maladjustment* and exclusion within society because of his social class

origins where clearly money was more important than the human condition, and also, throughout the years in the world of art, because of the development of the work of art as merely an industrial product. On the other hand, Montale stresses that he has kept his production in strict connection with his poetic inspiration. In 'Queste le ragioni del mio lungo silenzio' (1962) the poet explains that some of the reasons for not writing poetry for the previous eight years were connected to the fact that he had started to write prose and that the journalistic activity did not leave him time to write poetry: 'l'attività giornalistica non permette questa specie di *otium*, di vacanza interiore, che è necessaria, almeno a me, per la poesia' (*Sulla poesia*, p.593).¹³ His poetry remains, thus, the creation of a man's visions and inspiration at human speed and with man's existential condition in its aim.

0.2 Intentions for the present study

I should now like to focus on the reasons for my employing a linguistic approach to study Montale's texts and poetic universe. First of all, I must point out that this study uses the results of some linguistic studies on the poetic genre so as to be able to offer an original approach to Montale's poetry, therefore I should like to emphasize that the contribution of this thesis lies mainly, but not wholly, in the area of the Montalian studies. As a matter of fact, this study also offers some insights on the study of deixis and heteroglossia in connection with the lyric poem and, thus, may stimulate a broader sets of interests than just literary criticism. As Widdowson stresses in the introduction to his volume *Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature*, 'linguistics does have something to contribute to literary criticism, just as literary criticism has something to contribute to linguistics' (1975, p.1). In this sense, I believe that my

thesis may offer a bi-directional contribution to both Montale's criticism and linguistics.

Through the examination of Montale's language I shall highlight some areas of textual or thematic dissolution of the poetic worlds created by his texts and indicate a possible way to show that the negativity of his poetry is, to a certain extent, built into the structure of his poetic language. At the same time, though, I am aware that this thesis poses the problem of the connection between linguistic and thematic dissolution of Montale's universe of poetry and offers some examples of such dissolution, but does not exhaust altogether this area of studies.

In the last thirty years poetry has been studied by many scholars as discourse (Culler 1975; Easthope 1985; Carter and Simpson 1989; Green 1992) rather than as a separate kind of linguistic phenomenon from 'normal' spoken and written language. In this sense, poetic texts can be treated as any other kind of written text in the linguistic continuum and can be analyzed 'scientifically' in their linguistic characteristics. All texts, poetic or not, tend to project spatio-temporal co-ordinates and interpersonal relationships with an addressee (whether it is linguistically addressed by the poetic voice as a participant in the fictitious context, or is interpreted as an implicit relationship with the reader. See Semino 1992 and 1994). Most poetry seems to employ what Bakhtin has defined as the dialogic structure of the novel, that is a dialogue-like inherent relationship in its language: this may include an 'I' versus 'you', a 'here' versus 'there' and a 'now' versus 'then' tension. Dialogic, however, does not only imply a dialogue between an 'I' and a 'you', but

is the term which indicates that the discourse belongs doubly to an 'I' and to the other. [...] The dialogic sees in every word a word about the word,

addressed to the word; and it is only on condition that it belongs to this polyphony – to this ‘intertextual’ space – that the word is a ‘full’ word.¹⁴ (Kristeva 1973, p.109)

Without being aware of it, Bakhtin refers to the term ‘word’ not simply with the meaning of *mot*, but more at large he gives it the meaning of ‘discourse’ (*discours*), a linguistic concept which was lacking at the time (1930s). Although Kristeva identifies some limitations in Bakhtin’s approach to literary discourse, she recognizes him as one of the first scholars who intuitively ‘perceived that the categories advanced by linguistics and adopted in the poetics were the categories of the [‘ordinary’] language’ (*ibidem*, p.108).¹⁵

Thus, the language of literary texts is an unintentional medley of different social languages which create a polyphonic overall effect. The fragmented nature of voices within texts is the reflection of fragmented ideologies: ‘a text is not ideological, according to Bakhtin, unless it rests on ‘the unity of a mind’, the unity of a speaking ‘I’, which guarantees the validity of an ideology’ (*ibidem*, p.113). It is in this sense that Bakhtin refers to poetry and drama as monological genres. However, as it will be seen later in Chapter One and Five, modern linguists have demonstrated that poetic discourse is dialogical and polyphonic, in a similar degree to novelistic discourse.

The inherently dialogical nature of language turns poetic texts into poetic worlds (i.e. models of the world) and, at times, collected poetic texts resemble a poetic macro-text or universe. This is the case of Montale’s poetry, as I shall try to show in my present study.

On reading Montale I have found that his texts are analyzable from both the point of view of deictic projections and heteroglossic effects. Montale’s difficulty from

which his poetry stems is that of his feeling of disharmony with existence, a feeling which is poetically expressed through the imagery of the enclosed garden, the 'orto', where he feels both an existential and historical prisoner. Thus, linguistically, the theme of imprisonment can be envisaged in the deictic construction of fictional spaces which include a claustrophobic *here*-dimension which is always opposed to a *there*-dimension that is characterized by freedom and knowledge. The spatial organization also has an impact on the dynamics of voices present within the Montalian texts: the first person poetic voice is always identified as the prisoner, whilst the addressee is often identified as a woman who brings from the 'other' spatio-temporal dimension the signs of a potential salvation. Montale's poetic texts are of a dynamic nature and include shifts of time, space and voice whose depth can be studied deictically in order to reach the poetic significance that they carry.

From the point of view of stylistic effects in his language, Montale seems to move from a language which is shaped in close contact with nature in *Ossi di seppia* gradually to a language which employs a variety of social accents with polyphonic effects in his later poetry mainly from *Satura* onwards. Indeed it will be seen that although all of Montale's poetry presents, in different degrees, a heteroglossic linguistic component, the poetry of the first three books reveals a unitary philosophical-linguistic project through which a reading of reality may be achieved. As this poetic project fails and is demolished, especially throughout *La bufera e altro*, Montale's texts show themselves to adopt a more polyphonic poetic discourse which can be associated to the fragmented nature of his ideology and, more generally, of the ideology and language of a whole society.

In the last three chapters of this dissertation the study of heteroglossia and of the stylistic and linguistic dissolution in Montale's poetry will lead me to make reference to the social and political crisis in Italian society after the Second World War. Although at a first glance these aspects seem to be outside the ambit of this linguistic study of Montale's poetry, it is important to remember that Montale's writings originate and rest on the value of man and his existential condition. Thus, any study of his poetry, even if linguistic, must, to a certain extent, interpret the change of expression present in his production as a linguistic reaction to some actual change in society. In other words, Montale's poetry can never be viewed as a simple linguistic exercise, but must always be reconnected to humanity and its existential conditions.

0.3 Structure of the thesis

This dissertation includes the present introduction, seven chapters, a conclusion, six appendices and the relevant bibliographical references. The first four chapters examine deixis in Montale's poetry and the last three chapters look at the heteroglossic effects in his poetic language.¹⁶

Chapter One is rather theoretical as it examines deixis and its categories and gives various examples taken from spoken Italian and from Montale's poems. Once it has been clarified what deixis is, the chapter moves on to consider some of the motivations for the study of deixis in connection with the lyric poem. The study of the language of the lyric poem from the point of view of deixis shows that both poetic language and 'ordinary language' present similar problems in being analyzed and that, as 'ordinary language', poetic language is internally dialogic. The results of this overview are that deixis is recognized as having a central role in the structuring

of the spatio-temporal and inter-personal dimensions of a poetic text and the dynamics of its narration.

Chapter Two examines, first of all, the dynamics which relate the poetic voice and the text to the addressee-reader in 'In limine', the poem which opens *Ossi di seppia* and shows that the use of deixis in Montale establishes a relationship of complicity between text and reader.¹⁷ This chapter also discusses the dynamics of the spatio-temporal co-ordinates present within the Montalian poetic text and their dissolution into a further dimension which corresponds with timelessness and the momentary opening of the spatial limitation to the Other side.

Chapter Three sets out to complete the issue of spatio-temporal dissolution in Montale's poetry by examining more closely the third spatio-temporal dimension identified as the *limen*.¹⁸ Through the analysis of the deictic system of 'Sul limite' from *Farfalla di Dinard*, a series of linguistic elements will be singled out and then applied to two poems in order to look more closely at the shifts between the 'orto' and the *limen*. Although this chapter does not add much to the study of the spatio-temporal organization and dissolution in Montale's poetry, it offers further linguistic examples of passage from reality to *limen* and back.

Chapter Four moves on to analyze the dynamics of the Montalian voice within the poetic structure of his poems.¹⁹ The main issues are the organization of narration and the shift of voices which occur in various poems: the presence of a more stable single voice in the first three books is opposed to the presence of more voices not always syntactically controlled by the main narrator's voice in the poetry from *Satura* onwards. This chapter still uses deixis as the linguistic means of analysis. However, dissolution of the Montalian narratorial system is put in connection with

disintegration of his poetry-philosophy-ideology, thus polyphonic effects given by the presence of multiple voices are found in this chapter.

Chapter Five deals with the growing presence of heteroglossia in Montale's poetry in connection with the ideological and thematic disaggregation of his poetic universe.²⁰ In particular, it analyzes 'Il sogno del prigioniero' so as to show that it is a text-passage from a more monologic to a more polyphonic, parodistic and *tout court* heteroglossic stage in his poetry.

Chapter Six explores the origins of a complex metaphor which includes themes of smell, rot and cooking: such a metaphor stretches as far back as *Ossi di seppia* and gradually, from the end of *Occasioni* through to *La bufera*, corrupts itself to bodily waste. The introduction of faecality and references to bodily functions into his poetic discourse introduce parody and social satire in Montale's poetry. These aspects contribute to disintegrate Montale's poetic universe through the adoption of different social languages in his poetic language. An analysis of 'Botta e risposta I' will show the presence of different languages and ideologies within the same poem which generate lack of communication and polyphonic effects.

Finally, Chapter Seven offers further examples of heteroglossic language in *Satura* in order to look more attentively at the process of disintegration of Montale's poetic language and, along with it, ideological and philosophical outlook on reality. At the same time, though, some attention will be given to deictic signs and recurring metaphors which maintain a certain degree of coherence within the Montalian poetic universe. Thus, despite the disintegration of his language and themes, Montale proposes first the *recto* and later the *verso* of the same inspiration: in this sense it is possible to say that Montale's collections are coherent chapters of the same book.

Notes

¹ Montale's accusations of the modern concept of art and criticism are sharp and sadly accurate. In an interview appeared in *Quaderni milanesi* in 1960, he compares the production of art to an industrial chain-production whose rules and speed the artist is somehow obliged to follow, lest he may shut himself out of the arts' world: '“Guai a chi si ferma” può essere il loro motto. Le vostre domande non tengono conto del fatto che oggi anche l'avanguardia è una grande industria; d'altra parte, non ci si può mettere in una posizione aprioristicamente reazionaria senza sentirsi peggio che morti' ('Dialogo con Montale sulla poesia', *Sulla poesia*, p.585-86). Modern criticism reflects the same crisis: the modern critic is cold and 'professorale' and no longer writes to fight for an artistic or literary ideal. All that remains of the traditional figure of the critic are: 'le riviste, che pochi leggono; restano i rotocalchi dove il critico è come il cane in chiesa. Restano le tesi di laurea e i libri scritti per “farsi un titolo”, per vincere un concorso o procurarsi una “docenza”. Nulla di molto attraente' (*ibidem*, p.586). In the same interview, Montale talks about the present crisis of the concept of art, but worse even the crisis which regards the value of life: 'Più che l'arte in sé sembra in crisi il concetto di “opera d'arte”. E più che in crisi si direbbe quel sentimento antropocentrico della vita senza del quale la vita dell'uomo non ha (per noi uomini) alcun senso' (*ibidem*, p.586).

² Montale describes his feeling of disharmony with reality as 'un inadattamento, [...] un maladjustment psicologico e morale che è proprio a tutte le nature a fondo introspettivo, cioè a tutte le nature poetiche' ('Confessioni di scrittori', 1951, *Sulla poesia*, p.570).

³ *Ibidem*, p.570.

⁴ Montale, '7 domande sulla poesia a. E.M.', *Sulla poesia*, p.587.

⁵ In commenting on the reasons of Saba's delayed poetic success, in an article published in 1928, Montale underlines that Saba's later poetry presented a suffered effort to re-organize and elaborate its previous motives: 'La necessità che lo [Saba] guida nella sua creazione poetica ha forzato anche lui [...] alla grande impresa di ridare un ordine e un peso nuovi alle sue parole e alle sue fantasie. È il momento dell'*hic Rhodus*; e Umberto Saba ha *saltato* anche lui, pur senza rinunciare a quell'istinto poetico ch'è il suo grande dono. E qui i teorici del nuovo ordine estetico, gli esegeti dell'arte che nasce da una difficoltà, possono reputarsi lieti per una nuova e indiretta conferma che vien loro dalla recente poesia di Saba'. Once again, it is clear that Montale's concept of poetry originates from a fight to overcome a difficulty of some sort, not necessarily only existential. See 'Ragioni di Umberto Saba', 1928, *Sulla poesia*, pp.219-20.

⁶ If in the past poetry (in verses) had a more clearly defined form and role, today 'i confini tra verso e prosa si sono molto ravvicinati: oggi il verso è spesso un'illusione ottica' ('7 domande sulla poesia a E.M.', 1962, *Sulla poesia*, p.591). Poetry is not necessarily written in verses, therefore Montale feels a need to

distinguish between poetry as a literary genre and poetry as a concept at large: 'La vostra domanda è viziata dall'ipotesi che per poesia si debba intendere un particolare genere letterario: il che è anche vero, non però vero in assoluto. Si può immaginare una grande stagione poetica che non produca nulla di ciò che ordinariamente s'intenda per poesia' (*ibidem*, p.587).

⁷ In the wake of Croce's philosophy, Montale considers the artistic activity as a process of knowledge and the work of art as the mirror of the artist's view of the world. From this concept of literature as intimately connected with the reality surrounding the artist, originates Montale's desperate need to create a poetic language which can be adherent to reality, so adherent that it can be identified as reality itself. In this sense must be interpreted his use of the Eliotan theory of the 'objective correlative' (a theory which Montale denied existed when he first published 'Arsenio' in 1928; see 'Intervista immaginaria', *Sulla poesia*, p.567). For a study on the contact Montale-Eliot see M. Praz (1948), R. Meoli Toulmin (1971, pp.453-71).

⁸ The prose writer and the poetry writer are moved by the same motives, their only difference lies in their different needs of expression and different intonations: 'Quando prevale la necessità del discorso spiegato (che può essere vera poesia) si ha la stagione della prosa; quando appaiono scrittori portati a un'intensa concentrazione musicale ha la meglio la poesia' ('7 domande sulla poesia a E.M.', *Sulla poesia*, p.591). However Montale seems to claim that the poetic word originates from prose; in 'Intervista immaginaria' he states that 'il grande semenzaio d'ogni trovata poetica è nel campo della prosa' (*Sulla poesia*, p.564) and similarly in '7 domande sulla poesia a E.M.' he underlines once more that 'il verso nasce sempre dalla prosa e tende a ritornarvi (le frequenti "cadute" dei poeti)' (*Sulla poesia*, p.591).

⁹ Montale explained that in his poetry, especially in his early poetry, there is a musical dialectic between prose and poetry, even though in *occasioni* and *La bufera e altro*, which are far more metaphysical than *Ossi di seppia*, the main component of the language is purely poetic. Music and his poetry are one being and, more precisely: 'la poesia è un mostro: è musica fatta con parole e persino con idee: nasce come nasce, da un'intonazione iniziale che non si può prevedere prima che nasca il primo verso' ('Dialogo con Montale sulla poesia', *Sulla poesia*, p.584).

¹⁰ In saying so, Montale introduces the question of 'heteroglossia' in his poetry and, more generally, in modern poetry (read: end of 19th and 20th century poetry). Although Montale actually never explicitly uses the linguistic term of 'heteroglossia', it is, however, quite clear that he accepts the concept of heteroglossia in poetry, i.e. that the language of poetry is open to influences from other fields and reflects the surrounding social reality.

¹¹ In 'Della poesia d'oggi' (1931, now in *Sulla poesia*, pp.557-58) Montale states that 'la nuova poesia è fisiologicamente toccata dalla civiltà meccanica del nostro tempo, ma supera, quando lo supera, il suo ambiente. Se un giorno sparissero le macchine, a testimoniare dell'età delle macchine rimarrebbe appunto la poesia

d'oggi' (p.558). In saying so Montale clarifies that poetry and its language are the direct products of their underlying reality and society, but that the poet should also make the effort to create something that can go beyond the mere reflection of the surrounding reality.

¹² Corresponding with the crisis of the intellectual class between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, there can be identified a crisis of the concept of art itself. Art is no longer produced by man for man, but in exchange for money. It is in this sense that Montale refers to the loss of the anthropocentric feeling in art. 'Poiché la poesia — come il romanzo, sebbene su scala ridotta — sta diventando un prodotto industriale è ovvio che anch'essa subisca le oscillazioni causate dalla domanda e dall'offerta, cioè dal mercato. La poesia è dunque in crisi, né più né meno di tutto il resto: un prodotto se non si rinnova, magari peggiorando, perde la sua clientela' ('7 domande sulla poesia a E.M.', *Sulla poesia*, p.587).

¹³ Montale's poetic crisis and silence between the publication of *La bufera e altro* and *Satura* will be studied more into depth in Chapter Five.

¹⁴ Kristeva continues her discussion on the meaning of the term 'dialogic', by adding that the internal dialogue of discourse is infinite and shattered into fragmentary voices which belong to the 'I' and to the others. 'In this plurivocity the word/discourse does not have a fixed meaning [...]; it does not have a fixed user in order to maintain the fixity of the meaning [...]; it has no unitary listener to hear it [...]. The word discourse is scattered in a thousand facets, in a multiplicity of contexts – in the context of the discourses, in the intertextuality where the speaker becomes plural and becomes fragmentary, but also in the listener, ourselves: a 'unity' which Bakhtin calls 'Man', but which, he declares, resists definition, for 'Man never coincides with himself'. (Kristeva, 1973, pp.109-110).

¹⁵ In her article on *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Kristeva emphasizes some of the limitations which Bakhtin's study of the novelistic discourse shows to have: 'among these limitations are psychologism, the lack of any theory of the language-user, the unrecognized influence of Christianity in a humanist terminology (there are continual mentions of the heroes' "soul" and "conscience")' (1973, p.106). Despite this, she considers that the problems raised by Bakhtin on the theory of the novel are some of the earliest examples of discourse analysis which make him into a precursor of some of the most advanced contemporary research in the field of applied linguistics.

¹⁶ Whilst the thesis is addressed mainly to experts readers of Montale's poetry, it also takes into consideration those readers who may not be very familiar with Italian. Therefore, Appendix I contains published translations of the poems which are reported in their entirety and commented on in this dissertation.

¹⁷ Chapter Two contains some extracts of material which has been already published with the permission of both my supervisors in two different articles (see R. Riccobono, 1994, pp.111-32 [Appendix II]; R. Riccobono, 1996, pp.100-11

[Appendix III]). Permission of including it in this dissertation has been granted by Prof. Z. Baranski, editor of *The Italianist* and by Dr B. Parkinson, editor of *EWPAL*.

¹⁸ Chapter Three was presented as a paper at a AAIS Conference in Winston-Salem (NC, US) in 1997 and has been published in its entirety with the permission of both my supervisors in *The Italianist* 17 (see R. Riccobono, 1997, pp.74-98 [Appendix IV]). Permission of including it in this dissertation has been granted by Prof. Z. Baranski, editor of that Literary Periodical.

¹⁹ Chapter Four contains some extracts which been published with the permission of both my supervisors in *Montale. Words in time*. (see R. Riccobono, 1998, pp.125-38 [Appendix V]) Permission of including it in this dissertation has been granted by Prof. D. Thompson and Dr G. Talbot, editors of that volume.

²⁰ Chapter Five was presented as a paper at a Montale Centenary Conference in Edinburgh in 1997 and will be published in its entirety with the permission of both my supervisors in *Montale Readings* (2000, forthcoming [see Appendix VI]). Permission of including it in this dissertation has been granted by Dr É. P. Ó Ceallacháin and F. Pedriali, editors of that volume.

Chapter One: Deixis and its application to textual analysis in the lyric poem

1.1 Introduction

The main issue of this chapter is that of explaining what deixis is and how the study of deixis can be applied to the analysis of poetic texts. Before entering the universe of Montale's poetry it is necessary to clarify which are the linguistic categories that I shall use to analyze poetic texts in later chapters. In this first chapter I shall discuss deixis as a universal system present in possibly all languages (although my focus will be on Italian) around which each language organizes communication and reference.¹ It will also be possible to understand what studies of the deictic system in the lyric poem have been carried out in the last twenty years and what results they have borne until now. In support of this type of studies on poetic texts, I would like to join my voice to those of many other linguists and argue that it is necessary to widen the amount of study on this subject as what has been achieved until now is not, in any way, sufficient to account for the subtle and complex phenomenon of the linguistic structure of poetic texts.

Once the categories and purposes of the linguistic area of studies adopted have been clarified, I will be able to proceed to examining a number of Montale's poems through which I shall try to prove the following points:

- 1 the Montalian poetic text is built around a deictic system which allows us to study closely the spatio-temporal co-ordinates and interpersonal relationships between poetic personae created by the linguistic context;

- 2 the study of deixis is necessary to understand the process of dissolution which Montale's texts seem to contain in their linguistic structure;
- 3 the whole of Montale's production stands together as one macro-text, where the symbolic value of themes are constant and can be referred to within the co-text and constructed context by means of deictic terms;
- 4 through the study of deixis a reader can interpret and unify the textual, intra-textual and historical contexts implied in Montale's production and understand, synchronically, the single text and, diachronically, the macro-text;
- 5 the study of deixis can help the critic reach some linguistic and stylistic conclusions on Montale's poetry which may shed new light on the nature of his poetic universe.

1.2 Deixis

The term 'deixis' derives from an Ancient Greek word ('deiktikos') which meant 'indicating', 'pointing'. The term 'deixis' is used by the modern linguists to refer to the function that demonstratives, personal pronouns, tense and other grammatical and lexical linguistic elements have in an utterance in relation to the spatio-temporal coordinates of the surrounding environment.

Deixis encodes grammatically and/or lexically the relationship between the subjectivity of the speaker or writer (of the utterance), or zero-point (Lyons 1977, p.638; Green 1992a, p.122), or *origo* (Bühler 1934), the linguistic system and the spatio-temporal context where the utterance is produced (see also Rauh 1983). It also sets the interpersonal relationship between the speaker and the hearer(s). Deixis involves a centre of orientation which is egocentric because the encoder of the

utterance functions as the origin of a relationship between him, his body, and the space and time (the here-and-now) where the act of utterance takes place.²

Deixis can be more clearly understood if it is related to what Lyons defines as the canonical situation of utterance (1977, p.638), i.e. the face-to-face linguistic interaction. It is in this context that language as communication has its origins where the speaker, the addressee and the referents are all present in the same spatio-temporal environment.³ This is the situation where communication only requires direct reference to addressee(s) and referent(s) by means of indication (for example a gesture or a glance). There can be various communicative situations where the addressee is not present (a letter) or the referent is not at hand, or both the speaker and the addressee are present at the same time but in different places (in a telephone conversation, or perhaps talking via Internet) or, often the case in literary texts, where the speaker and the addressee are alive at different times and in different places and the referents are fictional. In these cases to establish communication it is necessary to resort to more sophisticated types of reference (definite articles, spatio-temporal adverbs, tense and so forth) whose indexical meaning must be realized in a relevant context identified by the addressee (or reader).⁴

Deixis has been recognized by Lyons as the source of reference (1975, pp.61-83). Each natural language functions as a system which is referentially connected to the surrounding social and existential context of its speakers. Language is, therefore, closely connected to the world in which the speakers live, and necessarily takes its viewpoint from that world. Reference is a fundamental component in languages as a speaker (or writer) needs to be able to anchor referentially his affirmations to a possible identifiable context whether it is real, fictional or hypothetical.

In literary language, where contexts are fictionally created, reference is of primary importance, as it is the only means available in texts to guide a reader to interpret the symbolic meaning in a re-created context of utterance. Green underlines that the use of deixis in literary texts is different from the use of deixis in ordinary language only in degree (although it would be problematic to embark on a discussion on what is 'ordinary language'): 'whereas in immediate discourse (discourse within the canonical situation) the range of possible contexts helps define the text, in the literary, or more particularly the poetic, utterance, the text must work to define the possible range of contexts' (Green 1992a, pp.77-78). This justifies the linguist to analyze the language in the poetic text and to reach conclusions which may help interpret the symbolic meaning of such a text.

As the focus of this study is the written literary text, and more specifically the poetic text, my study of deixis will be aimed at interpreting the poetic text by re-inhabiting it, i.e. by projecting myself, as a reader and critic, into the zero point's place and trying to reconstruct the viewpoint of the speaking voice and, indirectly, of the writer of the text(s) and the context(s) therein implied.

1.3 Deictic categories

Before proceeding to an introduction of the application of deictic analysis to the lyric poem, I shall discuss the deictic categories that will be taken into consideration in the study of Montale's poetry. The list of categories which I have chosen to adopt is based on Keith Green's (1992a, 1992b, 1995) classification:⁵

- Spatial deixis
- Temporal deixis
- *Origo* deixis
- Referential deixis
- Subjective deixis
- Discourse deixis
- Syntactic deixis

Each category section will include examples from Montale's poetry (with the deictic element italicized for easier reference).

1.3.1 Spatial deixis

This category accounts for the spatial dimensions created by the text around the speaking voice which is the main term of reference: demonstratives such as *questo* and *quello* are referred to objects which are positioned respectively close and far from the zero-point.

Locative adverbs (*qui* and *lì*) are used following the same principle as demonstratives.

- (1) 'A lei ti sporgi da *questa*
finestra che non s'illumina'
(*'Il balcone'*, vv.11-12, p.105)
- (2) 'e nuovi anelli
la seguono, più mobili di *quelli*
delle tue dita'
(*'Nuove stanze'*, vv.6-8, p.177)

Demonstratives and locative adverbs which indicate objects or persons which are close to the zero-point are called proximal, those which indicate referents far from it are called distal. Not all languages have demonstratives ‘organised primarily, or only, around the speaker’s location’ (Levinson 1983, p.82). In Italian, for instance, there are three demonstratives (functioning as both adjectives and pronouns): *questo* is used when the speaker wants to refer to some object which is close to him; *quello* is used when the object is far from him; *cotesto* is used when the object is far from who is speaking, but close to the addressee (Renzi 1988, p.617). The demonstrative *cotesto* automatically implies the presence of an addressee.⁶

- (3) ‘*Codesti i tuoi confini: quattro pareti nude,
da tanti anni le stesse*
(‘Contrabbasso’, vv.1-2, p.767)

As well as the use of demonstratives and locative adverbs, to refer to an object more specifically, further reference can be made by the use of concepts such as *left* and *right*, *down* and *up*, *below* and *above* etc.⁷

1.3.2 Temporal deixis

Temporal deixis includes temporal adverbs *ora*, *allora*, *oggi*, *ieri*, *domani*. Tense is another linguistic element which is accounted for by the category of temporal deixis. Tense in tensed languages allows the speaker and, together with him, the hearer to project themselves into the past or future, backwards and forward in time. The so called deictic projection (Lyons 1977, p.579) allows the speaker and the hearer of a text to project themselves deictically into a time t_1 , different from the coding time t_0 , and (re)experience the event while it is recounted. Deictic projection, however, does

not only function temporally, but also spatially. In order for temporal deixis to produce communication, it is necessary that the addressee of an utterance is able to adopt the frame of mind required to understand the utterance. In other words, temporal deixis requires both the speaker and the addressee to assume the same temporal co-ordinates for it to function.

The central tense that expresses the temporal dimension of the act of utterance is the present tense. The temporal co-ordinate of the act of utterance, or coding time, is to be seen as separate from the time referred to in the utterance itself, or content time (Sell 1987). In the canonical situation of utterance coding time coincides with receiving time. However, outside the face-to-face situation of utterance (with the exception of the conversation over the telephone) coding and receiving times occur separately.

The relationship between tense and deixis is not a transparent one. Tense is connected to deixis, while aspect is non-deictic. In languages such as English and Italian tenses express both deixis and aspect, therefore it is necessary to distinguish the deictic from the aspectual use of tense. Deictic utterances express restricted (i.e. punctual) actions, while aspectual ones express progressive actions, or general unrestricted actions. Within the subdivision of restricted actions Lyons (1977, p.688; 1982, p.107) has underlined that there are two ways of referring to an action: the experiencing mode and the observing mode, the former being deictic and the second being non-deictic.⁸

In Italian the present tense covers different functions:

- the function of timeless, limited and instantaneous present (see Quirk and Greenbaum 1995, pp.41-42). In limited and instantaneous sentences, the present

tense is associated with the spatio-temporal co-ordinates here-and-now and has therefore a deictic value.

- (4) 'Il frullo che tu *senti* non è un volo,
ma il commuoversi dell'eterno grembo'
(*'In limine'*, vv.6-7, p.5).

- a second function of the present is that of the perfect progressive action which in English is expressed by the form 'have been' followed by the verb in the gerund. In this case the present tense is non-deictic in its function.

- (5) 'Libeccio *sferza* da anni le vecchie mura'
(*'La casa dei doganieri'*, v.6, p.161).

- a third use of the present tense is that of expressing an imminent actions and future actions (see Lepschy and Lepschy 1992, p.146).

In imminent actions and future actions (already planned actions and therefore happening almost certainly) it may be tempting to consider it as containing a deictic perception of time. In reality the future always involves a margin of prediction, thus it is difficult to see it as a deictic expression of time.

The past tense is not always deictic. In Italian there are three past tenses which must be distinguished for their deictic or aspectual value:

- perfect which is used 'to describe a completed action which is still felt to be in some way linked to the present' (Lepschy and Lepschy 1992, p.228). Perfect is a deictic tense:

- (6) 'Hai dato il mio nome a un albero? Non è poco'
(‘Hai dato il mio nome a un albero? Non è poco’, v.1, p.258)

- past historic which is used for ‘completed action which is no longer related to the present’ (Lepschy and Lepschy 1992, p.229) and which also has a deictic value

- (7) 'Alcuno di noi *tirò* un ciottolo
che *ruppe* la tesa lucente’
(‘Vasca’, vv.6-7, p.71)

- imperfect which has various uses in Italian:⁹

1. it expresses progressive action in contrast with past historic or perfect in the same sentence. In this case imperfect is non-deictic:

- (8) 'Poi d’anno in anno - e chi più *contava*
le stagioni in quel buio? - qualche mano
che *tentava* invisibili spiragli
insinuò il suo memento’
(‘Botta e risposta I’, II, vv.18-21, p.276);

2. it is used for descriptions therefore this use is also non-deictic:

- (9) 'Nubi color magenta *s’addensavano*
sulla grotta di Fingal d’oltrecoasta’
(‘Nubi color magenta...’, vv.1-2, p.261);

3. it describes completed habitual action, thus having a non-deictic value.

Finally a brief point should be made on what Lyons refers to as the ‘earlier in the past’ concept of time (1977, p.689). This takes into account tenses such as the pluperfect. As this concept of time is part of the concept of anteriority (and

anteriority is a deictic notion) then this tense does project into the past precise temporal dimensions in relation to the zero-point of utterance. Lyons refers to pluperfect as a secondary tense (Lyons 1977, p.689).

The concepts of present and past are more clearly tied to tense and deictic, than that of futurity. Italian has a future tense which expresses futurity. However, in some instances, the Italian future tense can entail possibility, prediction or expectation: this suggests that the future tense in Italian is also connected with modality.

1.3.3 *Origo deixis*

This category includes first and second-person pronouns, first and second-person possessive adjectives and pronouns, vocatives, honorific titles. I am in agreement with Green (1992b) when he includes second-person pronouns under the category of the *origo*, as they refer to the hearer/addressee who plays an active role in the context of utterance and therefore can be seen as closely related to the *origo*.

Some clarification is needed on the grammatical concept of pronouns. Pronouns are traditionally thought as substitutes for nouns, but they also have other functions. It was said before that deixis involves an egocentric centre of orientation. The first person pronoun in every language constitutes therefore the central participant-role deictic expression. Personal pronouns are always expressed in languages and are either lexicalized, such as in English or French, or grammaticalized in pro-drop languages, such as in Italian where pronouns are lexicalized only in cases where they assume prominent value:¹⁰

- (10) *'Ho sostato talvolta nelle grotte
che t'assecondano, vaste*

o anguste, ombrose e amare'
 ('Ho sostato talvolta nelle grotte', vv.1-3, p.54);

- (11) 'ora *son io*
 l'agave che s'abbarbica al crepaccio
 dello scoglio'
 ('L'agave su lo scoglio', vv.15-17, p.68).

There is a fundamental difference between first-person and second-person pronouns, on one hand, and third-person pronouns, on the other hand. The Latin word *persona* translates the Ancient Greek 'dramatic character' or 'role', and it is on the model of Greek Drama that grammarians metaphorically thought of language-events, where the speaker has the principal role, and the addressee plays the secondary role. The third person plays all other roles. Therefore the first person and the second-person are positive figures in the Greek Drama because they are actually participating in the action of the drama, i.e. in the act of utterance. The third-person connotes a negative (passive) role as it does not refer to a participant in the linguistic act. In general communication the first-person pronoun refers to the speaker and the second-person pronoun to the hearer/addressee(s) both of whom participate in the act of utterance.¹⁰

Empathetic deixis may be considered as a sub-category of *origo* deixis. In fact it refers to those parts of the speech which encode mental proximity or distance to the *origo*. When such expressions are present within the context of utterance, the text may involve an emotional participation of the speaking voice and of the reader in the fictitious context. This can be achieved by the use of proximal demonstratives when referring to objects or persons which are not present within the same spatio-temporal co-ordinates where the poetic persona and the reader are placed:

- (12) 'Sebbene illetterata fu per noi
una piuma dell'aquila bicefala
questa Gerti che ormai si rifà viva
ogni morte di papa.'
(*'Dall'altra sponda'*, vv.1-4, p.595)

By using a proximal demonstrative referred to 'Gerti' (a person that belongs to the past of the speaking persona) the speaking voice establishes a closer emotional relationship with her (or his past): this relationship can be defined as empathy.

1.3.4 Referential deixis

The category of deictic reference includes: definite referring expressions such as definite articles (under certain conditions), demonstrative adjectives and pronouns (which have already been discussed within the spatial deixis category) and some pronominal expressions such as third-person pronouns. Definite articles are not considered part of the deictic system by all linguists, the reason being that definite articles do not include in their semantic meaning any kind of guidance (pointing) towards the identification of their referents. I shall consider definite articles (under certain conditions) as deictics because in my view they point at precise entities present in the context of situation surrounding the speaker and already familiar to him, therefore readily related to him both spatially and temporally.

The definite article in a sentence refers to an entity which 'can be identified uniquely in the contextual or general knowledge shared by speaker and hearer' (Quirk and others 1985, p.265). In order to identify such referent an addressee requires further information, not always available in the surrounding extra-linguistic context. In the following examples I will try to show how the highlighted phrases are

identified by a hearer/reader (each instance will show an example from ordinary language and one from Montale's poetry):

- (13) a. Portami *la tazza*!
 b. 'Portami *il girasole* ch'io lo trapianti
 nel mio terreno bruciato dal salino'
 ('Portami il girasole ch'io lo trapianti', vv.1-2, p.32).
- (14) a. Ho portato *il cane* a fare una passeggiata.
 b. 'Tu non ricordi *la casa* dei doganieri'
 13 ('La casa dei doganieri', v.1, p.161).
- (15) a. Preferisco *la macchina* rossa.
 b. *Il cavallo* che corre veloce è il mio.
 c. '[...] Quivi / gettammo un dì sulla *ferrigna* costa'
 ('I morti', vv.3-4, p.93).
 d. '*Il vento* che stasera suona attento'
 ('Corno inglese', v.1, p.11).
- (16) a. Oggi c'è *il sole* e la temperatura si è alzata.
 b. '*Il sole*, in alto, - e un secco greto'
 ('Gloria del disteso mezzogiorno', 11, v.5, p.37).
- (17) a. *Il Monte Bianco* è il più alto d'Europa.
 b. '...rotto il colmo sull'ansa, con un salto,
il Volturmo calò, giallo, la sua / piena'
 ('Verso Capua', vv.1-3, p.122).
- (18) a. *Il capo dello stato* si è dimesso.
 b. 'Dio salvi *il Re*' intonano le trombe
 da un padiglione'
 ('Eastbourne', vv.1-2, p.170).
- (19) a. Ho comperato la barca e la macchina di Andrea. *La macchina*
 veniva poco, ma *la barca* mi è costata un occhio della testa.
 b. 'L'ombra fidata che mi accompagna
 alla tua tomba [...]
l'ombra non ha più peso della tua
 da tanto seppellita'
 ('Voce giunta con le folaghe', vv.12-13 and vv.18-19, p.250)
- (20) a. A Natale i bimbi ricevono *i regali*.
 b. 'Oh il tuo Carnevale sarà più triste
 stanotte anche del mio, chiusa fra *i doni*
 tu per gli assenti'
 ('Carnevale di Gerti', vv.24-26, p.120).¹¹

Some of the examples taken from Montale's poetry seem to violate the principles by which definite reference functions in non-literary language. For example in sentence (13a) the referent *la tazza* is identified by the hearer in relation to the context of communication in which both speaker, referent and addressee are present. However, in sentence (13b) the referent expressed by the definite article is not identifiable by the reader. In the same way, in sentence (14a) *il cane* can be identified because of the familiar or domestic set-up, but in (14b) the customs' house can be identified by the addressee but not by the reader of the poem, unless they are identical. Likewise, in examples (15a) and (15b) the referents are pointed out to the addressee as unique by means of the information contained in the noun phrases themselves (*macchina* and *cavallo*): the adjective and the relative clause which function as post-modification elements. The same principles should apply to cases (15c) and (15d), except that once again the referents are not readily identifiable by the reader in the fictional context of utterance.

In cases (16), (17) and (18) satisfactory communication is successful in both literary and non-literary language, as the referents of the noun phrases are identifiable by the hearer/reader as respectively an 'object of which only one exists' (Lepschy and Lepschy 1992, p.165), a place-name (Lepschy and Lepschy 1992, pp.174-75) and honorific titles (Lepschy and Lepschy 1992, p.174).

In cases (19) and (20) the definite articles have an anaphoric value, where the referents have become part of the shared knowledge through previous mention within the text.¹² In sentences (19a) and (19b) the definite noun phrases *macchina*, *barca* and *l'ombra* are identical to their antecedents, therefore they are uniquely identifiable

within the text. Note that in Italian this type of anaphora is expressible also by means of demonstratives (Renzi 1995, p.337):

- (21) 'Ho ricevuto una lettera da Andrea. *Questa* mi informava
sulla sua salute'

Sentences (20a) and (20b) are slightly more complicated to justify. The referents *regali* and *doni* are easily identifiable in relation to the addressee's knowledge of Christmas and Carnival. This type of anaphora is known as *indirect* or *associative* anaphora (Quirk and others 1985, pp.267-68; Renzi 1995, p.340), because the reader will interpret the referents through his knowledge of the world and association to his previous experience. This use of definite reference can be also explained through the schema theory: a schema is a whole 'chunk' (Sperber and Wilson 1995, p.138) of shared knowledge which, once it has been introduced (*Natale*, for example), brings with it, implicitly, its components to which it is possible to refer with definite articles (*i regali*) even if they are mentioned for the first time.

In the first three literary cases (13b), (14b), (15c) and (15d), the use of the definite article seems to be somehow deviant because its referential link remains unanchored to any specific context recoverable by the reader. Leech refers to the incongruity between actual and implied fictional contexts as creating 'a special kind of violation, [...] which arises when a piece of language is somehow at odds with the immediate situation in which it occurs' (1969, p.183). Van Dijk underlines that in literary language reference can be made to 'a semantically constructed non-factual possible world' (1977, p.40) and not necessarily to the actual extra-linguistic context. In

literary texts the matching of the fictional context with the extra-linguistic world is often irrelevant.

Semino (1994, pp.14-25) has shown that definite articles do not need to be treated as deviant in literary texts, as they 'do not necessarily *rely upon* shared knowledge, but can *produce* shared knowledge. This is because definite articles carry in themselves a presupposition of the unique existence of the referents of the noun phrases they introduce' (Semino 1994, p.18). Generally, in communication, there are very few cases in which the referent is readily available for identification in the immediate extra-linguistic context as much of human communication occurs outside the canonical situation of utterance. In non-literary and in literary communication the reader does interpret definite reference basing himself on his knowledge of respectively the extra-linguistic factual context, but also on the mentally constructed context as guided by the text. In both cases successful reference may depend upon or create shared knowledge:

(22) *Attenti al cane!*

(23) *'Il fiore che ripete
dall'orlo del burrato
non scordarti di me'
(‘Il fiore che ripete’, vv.1-3, p.148)*

In example (22) and (23) the uniquely identifiable referents are assumed to exist within the world that the reader(s) constructs in order to interpret those discourses.

Finally, I should point out which of the cases highlighted above will be treated as deictic: cases such as in sentences (13), (14), (15), (19) and (20) will be considered as

having deictic value, those instances such as in (16), (17) and (18) will be ignored as non-deictic textual elements.

1.3.5 Discourse deixis

The category of discourse deixis involves all those linguistic elements which orientate the text towards itself, the zero-point and the addressee. These elements may include spatial, temporal and referential deictics. In the analysis of Montale's poetry discourse deixis will prove to be of primary importance for the activation of schemata within the single poem, and the intra-textual co-reference of various elements (both linguistic and stylistic) within the universe of Montale's poetry:

- (24) 'ora son io
l'agave che s'abbarbica al crepaccio
dello *scoglio*'
(*'L'agave su lo scoglio'*, vv.15-17, p.68)

- (25) 'e ora è tardi
per rituffarci dallo *scoglio*'
(*'A C.'*, vv.4-5, p.420).

These two examples are taken from two separate productions (namely *Ossi di seppia* and *Diario del '71 e del '72*). In *'A C.'* the definite referent *lo scoglio* is a clear deictic sign pointing back linguistically and thematically to the *scoglio* of *'L'agave su lo scoglio'* and triggering one of Montale's most familiar schemata (which will be discussed in the next chapters).

1.3.5 Syntactic deixis

Syntactic deixis includes syntactic forms which have a deictic function: for instance an interrogative construction of an utterance and the use of the imperative presuppose the presence of an addressee within the context implied:

- (26) 'Godi se il vento ch'entra nel pomario
vi rimena l'ondata della vita'
(*'In limine'*, vv.1-2, p.5)
- (27) 'Perché tardi? Nel pino lo scoiattolo
batte la coda a torcia sulla scorza'
(*'Perché tardi? Nel pino lo scoiattolo'*, vv.1-2, p.142).

It will become clear during the analysis of Montale's poetry that the presence of a reader/addressee is at times necessary to the functioning of his poetic texts.

1.3.7 Subjective deixis

Subjective deixis accounts for those linguistic elements which explicitly express the subjective experience of the encoder primarily through the use of modals.

- (28) 'Lo sai: *debbo* riperderti e non posso'
(*'Lo sai: debbo riperderti e non posso'*, v.1, p.133).

Modality does not seem to play a central part in Montale's poetry, thus epistemic and deontic modality will not be discussed as part of this work, and its poetic effects in Montale's poetry will be underlined only when strictly necessary.

1.4 Deixis in the lyric poem.

It has been said previously that the difference in functioning of deixis in ordinary language and in literary language is only in degree. Both literary and non-literary texts function by prescribed pragmatic, semantic and syntactic rules, both require a zero-point as their origin, an addressee and a context of some type.

Generally, in written language (whether it is literary or non-literary) the main difficulty is that of interpretation as the text is removed from its context. This separation of language from context may create a distance between indexical and symbolic meanings. Therefore, a reader's task in order to interpret a text is that of searching for a possible and relevant context in which the indexical signs may find their referents. In literary language, where contexts are fictional, the separation between indexical and symbolic meanings is more problematic as referents are less readily recoverable. Whilst in prose indexicality is usually verified internally within the text which encodes its own context, in poetry indexicality is foregrounded as it indicates referents and contexts but seldom verifies them textually. Thus, indexicality in poetry remains often unanchored. Semino claims that unanchored reference in poems produces 'an *in medias res* effect, whereby the readers have the impression of being plunged into the middle of a situation or of entering a story in mid-telling' (1994, p.19). This being 'plunged' into an active context of utterance creates two opposite effects:

- an effect of overhearing a monologue or a conversation between other people (in this case the indexicals are interpreted as addresser-orientated)

- a sign of complicity between addresser and reader and an invitation to take part in the dynamics of the text (in this case the indexicals are interpreted as addressee-orientated).¹³

In this way the linguistic devices of the poem create an active relationship between text and reader and, indirectly, between speaking voice and reader.

Studies such as those undertaken by Semino (1992, 1994, 1995) and by other scholars on the dynamics of the language in the lyric poem (Bühler 1982; Geyer-Ryan 1988; Wales 1988, 1993; Herman 1989; Green 1992a, 1992b; Widdowson 1993) have been central in trying to understand the nature of this literary genre. Through the study of deixis and heteroglossia in the last twenty years it has been possible to show that poetry like all other literary genres, adopts a language which is immersed socially and historically in a heteroglot environment and possesses an internal degree of dialogism. The concept of the internal dialogism of language (which has not yet been fully researched) is one of the most ingenious intuitions formulated by Bakhtin (1973, 1981).¹⁴ However, Bakhtin's liberal concept of dialogism and dialogue lead him to some simplistic views on poetry and drama which he considered as monologic and monoglossic genres, i.e. 'inferior' to the novelistic discourse.¹⁵

Recent studies in both prose and poetry have shown that analyses of linguistic dialogism are applicable to both genres and bear similar results. Such analyses, however, must take into consideration the different type of linguistic organization employed by prose and by poetry. In prose it is possible to resort to dialogue and long parentheses of descriptions where the narrator can introduce spaces and temporal coordinates. There is enough space to describe a whole society and interpersonal

relationships between the various characters, or groups of characters who do not ever get the opportunity to interact within the fictitious context created by the literary text.¹⁶

The dialogic nature of language of selfhood can be more clearly explained in the novel by taking Woolf's *The Waves* as an example. The main characters are six (Bernard, Rhoda, Jinny, Louis, Neville and Susan) and they all speak in the first person, therefore mobilizing six different speaking voices. The narration filters through six different consciences or points of view: this could mean that six different deictic projections are created by the fictitious context of utterance. It is never clear whether the characters are speaking to each other, or whether the novel proceeds by monologues. In either case this technique reveals the presence of six projections of the implied writer, six *alter egos* which enhance the internal dialogism of the language used by the writer.¹⁷

It is possible to show that the same type of analysis is possible in genres such as poetry and drama. As an example of this Shakespeare's *Hamlet* can be considered. Wales (1988) suggests that in his soliloquies Hamlet reveals his tortures for the death of his father and his plan for revenge on his uncle; at the same time he reproaches himself for being a coward and not being able to act (see Act II, Scene 2). In doing this he exposes a double self, an *alter ego*. This presence of a double personality shows the dialogic nature of the language employed in the soliloquies: it is as if Hamlet's *alter ego* was replying to Hamlet's exclamations. Wales (1988, p.187) has reconstructed a possible dialogue occurring between Hamlet and his *alter ego*:

Ha! 'Swounds, I should take it: for it cannot be
But I am pigeon-liver'd ...

[Yes, you are: but why are you?]

... or ere this
 I should ha' fatt'd all the region kites
 With the slave's offal ...
[What is this slave?]

... Bloody, bawdy villain!
 Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!
[Yes, yes, I get the point: what follows from this?]
 O, vengeance!
[A good idea: why not?] etc.

Poetry, and the lyric poem in particular, uses a more compressed style of expression than prose and drama. It is, therefore, more difficult for the reader to be guided to single out spatio-temporal and interpersonal dimensions within the poetic context and different levels of vocabulary interaction. However, poetry, like prose, employs the same linguistic strategies of communication used in everyday discourse situations. If discourse reflects spatio-temporal and interpersonal dimensions of the existential environment which surrounds its users, then the same relationships are created within poetic contexts of utterance. Traditionally speaking voices or personae, around which literary deictic systems revolve, cannot be identified with real-life authors, but they are linguistic constructs (Herman 1989) deriving from the relationship that a reader establishes with a text when interpreting it. The same can be said when referring to poetic voices within the lyric poem genre: thus, around a poetic voice it is possible to reconstruct a whole fictional context of situation with relevant spatio-temporal and inter-personal relationships.

Green (1992b) considers deixis a central element in the understanding of the lyric poem because it enables the reader to construct a context so as to interpret the symbolical meaning of the text. Semino has corroborated this thesis by underlining

the fact that the contexts readers build may vary 'depending on the interplay between the deictic expressions in the text, the subject-matter and linguistic properties of the text as a whole, the readers' attitudes and background knowledge' (1992, p.135). Semino (1992) has claimed that the relationship between the speaking voice in the lyric poem and the reader can vary from the case where the reader is a complete spectator to the fictitious context of utterance, or an 'eavesdropper' listening to other people's private conversations, to the case where the reader is drawn into the context to participate emotionally in the implications of the poetic text. She has also shown how the deictic centre can shift within the same text and, thus, how the point of view of fictional enunciation can vary (Semino 1995). This has drawn attention to deictic shifts which imply the presence of multiple voices within the same text. She has, thus, proved the possible dynamic nature of poetic voices in the lyric poem.

1.5 Conclusion

These reflections on the study of the deictic system in poetry are introductory to my study of deixis in Montale's poetic texts and by no means exhaustive. The points introduced in this section will be discussed and exemplified more in detail in the next chapters, where it will become clear that Montale's poetry is perfectly well analyzable from the perspective of the functioning of deixis.

Meanwhile the following conclusions have been reached on the linguistic nature of the poetic text:

1. poetic language presents similar problems in being analyzed as 'ordinary language';

2. the language of poetry is internally dialogic as is language in general in the Bakhtinian sense;
3. the relationship between text-reader and speaking voice-addressee is a dynamic one;
4. the nature of poetic voices can be considered as dynamic and not static.

Notes

¹ All examples will be taken from Italian and when possible from Montale's poetry. All quotations of Montale's poetry are taken from Eugenio Montale, *L'opera in versi*, 1980.

² For reasons of clarity and straightforward reference I shall assign a specific gender to the roles within communication. The speaking voice will be referred to as a male voice, whilst the addressee will be treated as a female role. The reader will be referred to as a male role except when it coincides with the addressee of a text.

³ Deixis originates in the face-to-face situation of utterance: this involves a first person speaker and an addressee. The deictic centre is not to be seen as static, but as dynamic as it always shifts from the speaker to the hearer as their roles change during conversation.

⁴ I have suppressed any difference between the term indexical and deictic, thus my use of such terms in this work will be interchangeable.

⁵ I have divorced Green's category 'spatio-temporal deixis' into two separate categories. The reason for doing so will become clear during my analyses of Montale's poems.

⁶ The demonstrative 'cotesto' ('codesto' in the northern variant, where /t/ becomes /d/), although is still found as an entry in dictionaries, belongs to the written mode rather than the spoken. The term is not yet obsolete, but has been falling into disuse, at least in spoken Italian.

⁷ For a thorough analysis of space deixis refer to Lyons (1977, pp.690-703).

⁸ In my analysis of poetry in later chapters, it will become clear that not all restricted actions referred to are to be treated as deictic: i.e. in Montale's poetry observing mode and experiencing mode are clearly distinguishable within the dynamics of his poetic texts.

⁹ Imperfect has other uses which are not relevant to my present discussion. For further reference see Lepschy and Lepschy (1992, pp.230-32).

¹⁰ Lyons underlines that there is a fundamental difference in the role of first and second- person pronouns, on one hand, and of third-person pronouns, on the other hand: 'third-person personal pronouns are obviously dispensable in favour of demonstrative pronouns; and there are many languages that do not have third-person personal pronoun comparable with the English 'he', 'she', 'it' and 'they'. There is perhaps no language, however, in which there are no first-person and second-person pronouns' (1977, pp.638-39). Widdowson (1993, p.123) claims that what are traditionally known as first and second-person pronouns do not have a function of

pronouns as they never replace a noun. He, therefore, prefers to call them 'terms of address'. On the other hand, third-person pronouns are used as substitutes for nouns or proper names. What happens, in fact, in the first stage of pronoun mastering is that a child will often refer to him/herself by his/her name rather than by using 'I'. This occurs because the role of the third person pronoun is fixed rather than dynamic, contrarily to the role of the first and second personal pronouns. In this way the child is not involved in the speaker-hearer role switch between 'I' and 'you'.

¹¹ All other cases of use of non-deictic definite articles in Italian will not be discussed here. These cases can be looked up in Renzi (1988, pp.357-423).

¹² For further attention to the close relationship between deixis and anaphora see Lyons 1991, pp.166-78; Ehlich 1982, pp.315-38.

¹³ It will become clear in later chapters how Montale employs indexicality in both senses in his poetry.

¹⁴ Bakhtin's ideas have been one of the central stimuli of much linguistic research for the past thirty years which have led to many (re-)publications of essays and works written in the 1920s by Bakhtin and his associates' circle. Many of his theories surprisingly anticipated formulations of later years by other linguists when the Russian philosopher-linguist-critic was still unknown in the West. Bakhtin was the first to study the phenomenon of literary language as completely immersed in its socio-cultural multiplicity, whilst until the 1970s language was studied as a 'singled-voiced' phenomenon belonging to each individual writer.

Bakhtin (1981), however, defined poetry as a monoglossic linguistic phenomenon contrarily to the style of language used in the novel which he considered heteroglossic. He had also seen the presence of a speaking voice in poetry, or the 'I' around which the context of utterance revolves, as static: poetic language was then to be seen as monoglossic and the speaking persona as monologic.

¹⁵ Bakhtin analyzed the function of the novelistic genre from the Greek novel up to modern times. Especially he stressed the function of laughter which is implicit in the novelistic genre and which allows man to detach from himself and look at himself in an ironical way: this brings out the double self of the writer and/or characters, i.e. the dialogism inherent to the language used in the novel.

Both characteristics of the dynamics of the speaking persona and heteroglossia in Montale's poetry will be dealt with in later chapters.

¹⁶ Consider, for instance how in *Mrs Dalloway* two groups of characters (that pivoting around Clarissa Dalloway and that revolving around Septimus Warren Smith) are of central importance despite the fact that their stories are completely separate and never interplait during the development of the novel. The plot is organized along two narratorial levels which run parallel. The fictitious context of *Mrs Dalloway* is quite complex and is an example of novelistic discourse which creates spatio-temporal and interpersonal dimensions similar to those of the existential reality known to the reader.

¹⁷ This is only one way of showing the dialogism of language. It may be possible also to refer to Jakobson's ideas of considering each word in a text and each morpheme present in a word and say that they recall *in absentia* words and sounds which are categorized as their opposites. See Jakobson (1972).



Chapter Two: The spatio-temporal dimension and its dissolution

‘If you cannot alter the place all that is left to alter is the time’
(William Golding, *Rites of Passage*, p.85)

2.1 Introduction

Montale’s poetry has been labelled as the poetry of negativity and the poetry of dissolution of reality (Solmi 1926; Contini 1974; West 1989; Luperini 1992). I would like to look at the questions of negativity and dissolution in Montale’s poetry and analyze them from a linguistic point of view.

This chapter will take into consideration the spatio-temporal dimensions which are created by the presence of indexicals within the structure of Montale’s texts. I shall deal with the spatial dimensions and the influence of the Ligurian landscape, with the temporal dimensions and the theme of memory, and with the shifts of focus from one space to the other and one concept of time to another. I shall attempt to tie these aspects into Montale’s view of ‘la rete / che ci stringe’ (‘In limine’, vv.15-16, p.5), i.e. the spatio-temporal reality.

This and the next chapter will be closely connected as I shall continue to study the spatio-temporal concepts of reality, moving my focus onto the screen which separates the tangible reality from what lies beyond the ‘erto muro’ (‘In limine’, v.10, p.5). I shall do this by further analyzing deixis and its implications.

2.2 The poetry of dissolution

Eugenio Montale’s poetry has been described as the result of a continuous philosophical research into reality, resulting in answers which are never definite. His

poetry is often linguistically marked by the use of adverbs such as 'forse'; by the negation of knowledge verbs, 'non so'; by the presence of opinion verbs, 'credo' and hypothetical structures, i.e. 'if' clauses (West 1981, pp.57-58). From the very *debut*, in 'In limine' the use of tentative forms characterizes his poetry:

un rovello è di qua dall'erto muro.
Se procedi t'imbatti
 tu *forse* nel fantasma che ti salva
 ('In limine', vv.10-12, p.5).

The lack of certainty built into his language, brings the poet to deal thematically with all those aspects of human reality which are not yet complete and which lack identity:

Ma ecco, c'è altro che striscia
 a fior della spera rifatta liscia:
 di erompere non ha virtù,
 vuol vivere e non sa come.
 ('Vasca', vv.9-12, p.71)

'Vasca' concludes with the powerful sentence 'è nato e morto, e non ha avuto un nome' (v.14, p.71). The struggle of entities to rise and shape themselves into identities is defeated *a priori*. Nothing is autonomous and defined in the Montalian universe. Man lives in the total lack of knowledge and certainty. This outlook takes its origins from Montale's feeling of disharmony with reality of which he had always been aware since his childhood. In 'Confessioni di scrittori' the poet declared:

Avendo sentito fin dalla nascita una totale disarmonia con la realtà che mi circondava, la materia della mia ispirazione non poteva essere che *quella* disarmonia... (Montale 1951, *Sulla poesia*, 1976, p.570).

His disharmony with reality is clearly seen in his attitude towards the dissolution of identity; not just the poet's identity, the origin of the problem, but the identity of

everything that surrounds him. Reality is, thus, described as 'il limbo squallido / delle monche esistenze' ('Crisalide', vv.37-38, p.85). Man himself is but a shadow: 'Ma è possibile, / lo sai, amare un'ombra, ombre noi stessi' ('Tuo fratello morì giovane; tu eri', vv.13-14, p.293).

The spatio-temporal dimensions of reality are given *a priori* as deceptive, as a reality of shadows. Thematically and semantically Montale's poetry has been defined as 'la poesia dell'assenza' (Luperini 1992, p.69). Montale's poetry is characterized by a continuous dissolution: it starts from the object as it is and, thereafter, proceeds to dissolve it into nothingness.

At the outset of his first book, *Ossi di seppia*, Montale speaks to his readers about the possibility of proceeding beyond the limits of the spatio-temporal setting where man is obliged to dwell. Montale believes in the continuity of reality and unreality, between immanence and transcendence, between life and death.¹ Leaping out of 'la rete / che ci stringe' ('In limine', vv.15-16, p.5) means not only renouncing the certainty of reality which is familiar to us, but also offering a vow of faith to the transcendent or to the after-life. As West (1989) has shown, Montale has a very strong attitude to 'dissolution into unnameability', but, at the same time, struggles constantly to find an identity. Thus, if in his first book the fight to find an identity tragically takes him always to its negation, in *Le occasioni* and *La bufera e altro* the identity is found in the figure of the *messenger*, or the *Cristofora* who is either absent (mainly in *Occasioni*), or comes to visit the poet bringing with her signs of the afterlife or underworld.²

There seems to be an overturn of values between reality and what is 'oltre', beyond touch, sight, i.e. unreality. Everything which belongs to human reality lacks the

essence which is attributed to what lies beyond the wall. Yet in *Ossi di seppia* all the negative connotations of reality find a sort of positivity in knowing that, although man is just one of the 'monche esistenze', at least he exists and is aware of his nothingness.³

From *Ossi di seppia*, via *Le occasioni*, until *La bufera*, Montale's attachment to 'l'oltremondo' becomes even clearer. What belongs to unreality (the shadows, or the dead, etc.) acquires a more positive essence than that which characterizes our reality:

La differenza costitutiva fra Montale e i suoi contemporanei sta in ciò che questi sono in pace con la realtà [...] mentre Montale non ha certezza del reale. [...] Ma si può anticipare che, come delle *Occasioni* così della *Bufera* sono già negli *Ossi* veri e propri elementi avanti la lettera. In breve: in un mondo talmente cancellato, improbabile e senza avvenire, i vivi non sono più autonomi di ombre; al confronto i morti, depositari del ritornante passato, acquistano la pienezza di vita di cui quel mondo è capace. (Contini 1974, pp.82-85)

The continuity between immanence and transcendence is strengthened along the *excursus* of Montale's poetry and becomes the central idea of his late books (from *Satura* onwards). However, the idea that a kind of salvation from the lack of essence is to be found beyond the wall, by the powers of a ghost, is already present in 'In limine': 'Se procedi t'imbatti / tu forse nel fantasma che ti salva' (vv.11-12, p.5). The dissolution of reality and the evaluation of what is beyond reality are constantly present throughout Montale's poetry. If immanence and transcendence, life and death are contiguous, then one only needs to find the way to step out of reality into the other dimension, to break the veil which separates reality and unreality. Montale had been looking from the start, and on all possible occasions, for the 'maglia rotta' ('In limine', v.15, p.5):

Vedi, in questi silenzi in cui le cose
 s'abbandonano e sembrano vicine
 a tradire il loro ultimo segreto,
 talora ci si aspetta
 di scoprire uno sbaglio di Natura,
 il punto morto del mondo, l'anello che non tiene,
 il filo da disbrogliare che finalmente ci metta
 nel mezzo di una verità.
 ('I limoni', vv.22-29, pp.9-10)

There is, thus, a constant effort to know what lies beyond the wall and how to become part of unreality.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the process of the Montalian dissolution from a linguistic point of view and, in particular, from the angle of the functioning of deixis within the system of the text. My aim is that of analyzing the system of the deictics in such a way as to present Montale's poetic texts in a new light which should show exactly how far the poetic voice and the fictive context are being dissolved.

2.3 Spatio-temporal dimensions in the Montalian text

Many are the reasons for commencing from 'In limine': Montale chose to place it at the opening of his first book, *Ossi di seppia*, as the 'door' to his personal *inferno*. 'In limine' can be seen to anticipate the whole of Montale's poetic system by theme and structure and is paradigmatic for the use of both spatial and temporal deictics, therefore I shall access Montale's poetic universe through its indicated entrance.

Firstly, I shall offer a detailed analysis of the deictic organization of its language. Secondly, I will tie together my linguistic observations in a more traditional interpretation of the symbols of this text.⁴

*Godi se il vento ch'entra nel pomario
vi rimena l'ondata della vita:
qui dove affonda un morto
viluppo di memorie,
orto non era, ma reliquiario.*

5

*Il frullo che tu senti non è un volo,
ma il commuoversi dell'eterno grembo;
vedi che si trasforma questo lembo
di terra solitario in un crogiuolo.*

*Un rovello è di qua dall'erto muro.
Se procedi t'imbatti
tu forse nel fantasma che ti salva:
si compongono qui le storie, gli atti
scancellati pel giuoco del futuro.*

10

*Cerca una maglia rotta nella rete
che ci stringe, tu balza fuori, fuggi!
Va, per te l'ho pregato, — ora la sete
mi sarà lieve, meno acre la ruggine...*

15

Spatial deictics:

'qui' (v.3)
'questo lembo' (v.8)
'di qua' (v.10)
'qui' (v.13)
'fuori' (v.16)

Origo deictics:

'tu senti' (v.6)
'procedi' (v.11)
't'imbatti tu' (vv.11-12)
'ti' (v.12)
'tu' (v.16)
'va' (v.17)
'mi' (v.17)

Discourse deictics:

None

Temporal deictics:

'godi' (v.1)
'entra' (v.1)
'vi rimena' (v.2)
'affonda' (v.3)
'senti' (v.6)
'vedi' (v.8)
'si compongono' (v.13)
'cerca' (v.15)
'stringe' (v.16)
'balza' (v.16)
'fuggi' (v.16)
'l'ho pregato' (v.17)
'ora' (v.17)

Subjectivity deictics:

None

Referential deictics:

'il vento' (v.1)
'nel pomario' (v.1)
'il frullo' (v.6)
'questo lembo' (v.8)
'dall'erto muro' (v.10)
'nella rete' (v.15)

Syntactic deictics:

'godi' (v.1)
'vedi' (v.8)
'cerca' (v.15)
'balza' (v.16)
'fuggi' (v.16)
'va' (v.17)

It should be observed that the time of the speech event, or coding time, and the time of the narrated event, or content time, of this poem are identical: this is clear because

of the use of imperatives 'godi' (v.1), 'vedi' (v.8), 'cerca' (v.15), 'balza' and 'fuggi' (v.16), and 'va' (v.17) which are tensed verbal expressions and indicate 'now' as the contextual temporal dimension. Imperatives also act as syntactic deictics: the use of imperatives mobilizes a deictic centre, the speaking voice, and a silent addressee who is either already within the context of utterance or is being invited to participate in it. The definite article 'il', which defines 'pomario' ('nel pomario') acts as a referential deictic. It has been seen that in poetry noun phrases that are introduced by definite articles produce shared knowledge and that the effects of unanchored reference 'plunge the reader in the middle of *the fictitious* situation' (Semino 1994, p.19, my change). The use of the definite article in introducing 'pomario' gives the idea that both the speaking voice and the addressee know to which orchard reference is made and knots a tight bond between them, implying the existence of a well known and familiar place where they have spent some time together.⁵ The definite article 'il' defining 'vento' (v.1) is another referential deictic which creates shared knowledge within the poetic text. The picture created until now by the text is that of a poetic *persona* who is indicating to a silent addressee the presence of 'il vento' within 'il pomario'. If the 'tu' present within the context of utterance is defined as the addressee to whom the speaking voice is talking, then we must distinguish between reader and addressee. So far it seems as if the unanchored reference to the 'pomario' and 'vento' is to be interpreted as a sign of complicity between speaking voice and addressee, but it is not clear whether the reader can feel included or excluded from this relationship.

In the third line the first spatial deictic 'qui' is encountered, which completes the scene. The context of utterance is defined by the following co-ordinates: *now* and *here*. *Here* may be interpreted as referring to the 'pomario', but meta-textually also to

the poetic text.⁶ It is possible to extend this consideration also to temporal deixis: the use of present tense and imperatives not only refers to the time of contact between text and addressee, but also between text and reader. If this interpretation is acceptable then 'In limine' is a poetic text *in fieri*: it becomes functional if the addressee, who may be seen as identical to the reader, accepts the speaking voice's invitation to take part in the dynamics of the *reliquary-poem-orchard*.

Due to the rhyme that links 'pomario' (v.1) to 'reliquario' (v.5), 'qui' can be seen to refer also to the reliquary. A reliquary is the place where relics are kept and, therefore, it connotes a sacred, but dead place, a place where the past lives and where our memories linger and which is now brought back to life by the wind ('il vento', v.1). 'Era' (v.5) suddenly creates a further dimension in the temporal setting: a past situation which is of lesser importance than the present time because it refers to the status of the 'pomario' (now a fertile and productive plot of land) before the wind came to bring life back to it, i.e. when it was only a reliquary. 'Era' being an imperfect does not belong to the deictic system of the text, but furnishes a background description against which temporal indexicals (mainly in the present) are set in order to highlight the changes which happen to the text.

The presence of two temporal dimensions is of prime importance in order for the reader-addressee to be able to understand the changes which happen to the spatial dimensions of the place where Montale has brought him. The context suggested by the indexical and symbolical meanings has two different natures: a reliquary or an orchard. It is the presence of 'il vento' (v.1) that can change it from one to the other: i.e. the relationship established by the reader-addressee with the text as a consequence of his reading of the poem. In other words the poetic text comes to life and becomes

fruitful because somebody reads it; were it to remain unread it would be a reliquary, i.e. dead language. The use of deixis has so far been used by the poet to draw the reader-addressee into the space of a *reliquary-poem-orchard* situation, thus bringing the wind of life to dead memories in order for them to turn into living and fruitful language. The need for a reader-addressee is therefore built into the poetic text.⁷

In the second stanza, from the connotation of an instinctual pleasure ('godì', v.1) where generally all senses are involved, we are now attracted by a sound: 'il frullo' (v.6). The definite article which identifies 'frullo' creates shared knowledge and brings the addressee-reader to actually hear such a sound. If in the first stanza the speaking voice was progressively making use of deixis in order to invite the reader to become part of the text and to bring back to it the breath of life, now that the addressee-reader has become part of the poetic text and has transformed the reliquary back into a fruitful orchard, the poetic voice directs his attention to what is happening within the orchard, connoted as a symbolical space. We find another imperative in line 8, 'vedi' (literally 'see', but, as Jonathan Galassi suggests in his translation [see p.277], there seems to be a more active meaning in the verb, i.e. 'watch') which involves a new sense of perception (sight): 'vedi che si trasforma questo lembo / di terra solitario in un crogiuolo' (vv.8-9). The combination of deictic terms and their symbolic interpretation results in the complete participation of the reader in the context of enunciation.

The use of a demonstrative adjective 'questo' (v.8), generally, implies not only shared knowledge between the speaker and the listener, but also possible coexistence in the same space: the poetic text has become a metaphoric space, similar to the spatial dimension which we know from our experience of reality. First, the

'reliquiario' (v.5) has been turned into 'orto' by the wind of life, now 'questo lembo / di terra solitario' (vv.8-9) transforms itself into a 'crogiuolo' (v.9).

The concept of space changes within this poetic text when we start reading the third stanza. The presence of the 'erto muro' (v.10) suggests another possible spatial dimension within the reality described by the text. The wall is dividing two different spaces and, as the wall is 'erto', it is implicit that the space that lies beyond the wall is not easily reachable. The adverb 'di qua' (v.10), therefore, indicates the presence of deictic spatial dimensions and, at the same time, suggests the metaphorical image of the prison-like space where man is obliged to exist. But there is some hope of salvation for the reader-addressee if he can proceed beyond the wall: 'Se procedi t'imbatti / tu forse nel fantasma che ti salva' (vv.11-12).⁸

So far, the use of deixis in this text has attracted the reader-addressee from somewhere outside the text into the context and made him participate in the dynamics of what is going on there. The deixis system is now projecting the reader into what lies beyond the delimitation of the text, i.e. beyond the wall, by also suggesting a possible kind of salvation from the 'rovello' (v.10) that exists in his and the reader-addressee's present position, i.e. within the orchard.

We encounter a new spatial deictic 'qui' (v.13) which is described as the place where 'si compongono [...] le storie, gli atti / scancellati pel giuoco del futuro' (vv.13-14). The spatial adverb 'qui' in line 13 denotes the 'orto' (v.5), although it has changed, through the intervention of the reader-addressee, into a melting-pot where all forms are returned to matter. The speaking voice prompts the reader-addressee to look for 'una maglia rotta nella rete / che ci stringe' (vv.15-16). It is clear that the place denoted by 'qui' (v.3) is in some way unpleasant and restrictive for both the

speaking voice and the reader-addressee, this being underlined by the use of the *origo* deictic 'ci' (v.16). From the deictic point of view the use of the *origo* deictic 'ci' (v.16), which indicates a common destiny, is replaced by exhortative second-person imperatives: 'cerca' (v.16), 'fuggi' (v.16) and 'va' (v.17). Only the reader-addressee is able to look for a possible passage and, thus, if he wants, to escape: the speaking voice cannot or has no intention of leaving the claustrophobic 'orto' (v.5), but repeatedly invites the reader-addressee to do so ('tu balza fuori, fuggi!', v.16).⁹ The shift between the *origo* deictic 'ci' (v.16) and 'tu' (v.16), implied by the imperatives, clearly draws a distinction between the destinies of the speaking voice and the reader-addressee.

In the last two lines of the poem, it is not clear whether the reader-addressee has burst through the 'wall'. The temporal deictic 'ora' in lines 17 and 18 ('ora la sete / mi sarà più lieve, meno acre la ruggine...') indicates a new temporal dimension in which the role of the speaking voice-Shaman has been fulfilled, i.e. he has managed to help the 'tu' to jump over the wall. However, the use of the future in Montale's poetry ('sarà', v.18) often has a hypothetical value (as will be seen in 'Carnevale di Gerti', section 3.5, pp.119-32), which leaves the reader to ponder on what has actually happened. The linguistic signs that suggest that probably the speaking voice has remained alone within the garden are the *origo* deictics 'ci' (v.16) and 'mi' (v.18). If 'ci' in line 16 suggested a common existential condition for both speaking persona and addressee, 'mi' in line 18 refers only to the destiny of the speaking voice.

Through the analysis of the deictic system in 'In limine' it has been possible to see that the Montalian text's organization includes two concepts of space (a negative *here* and an-Other space connoted as a dimension beyond a garden wall) and two concepts

of time (a time when the text is 'un morto / viluppo di memorie' [vv.3-4], i.e. inactive, and a time when, thanks to the intervention of the 'vento' [v.1], it becomes alive and functional). It has also become clear that through the use of deictic elements, the speaking voice invites the reader-addressee to take part in the dynamics of the text and later urges him to leave it. 'In limine' seems to function as a truthful text-door through which the reader-addressee must pass (and where he cannot stay) in order to have access to the Other space beyond the wall.

The double temporal and spatial dimensions and the opposite direction included in the meaning of actions ('coming in' and 'getting out'), find a confirmation in the use of vocabulary and metaphors. 'In limine' makes use of vocabulary referring to the four elements of Nature, as Giachery (1985, p.13) underlines: air ('Godì se il vento ch'entra nel pomario', v.1), water ('vi rimena l'ondata della vita', v.2), earth and fire ('il commuoversi dell'eterno grembo', v.7); 'questo lembo / di terra solitario in un crogiuolo', vv.8-9). The garden is the symbol of the space enclosed, the centre of Montale's landscape, 'lo spazio protetto, l'angolo della vita e delle sue abitudini, il chiuso'.¹⁰ It is also the space of his private affections and memories or, as Fabris has shown, 'un *enclos* invalicabile, un *temenos*, recinto sacro, ove, pei giochi del futuro, si compongono senza posa (rovello) le storie, gli atti' (1984, p.111).¹¹ The wind is the element which is able to bring the 'ondata della vita' (v.2) into the barren garden or *hortus conclusus* and has the force of turning it from a cemetery ('un morto viluppo di memorie', vv.3-4; 'reliquiario', v.5) to a place of creation through destruction ('crogiuolo').¹² The force of wind and of water (anticipatory of the Sea-Father in 'Mediterraneo') penetrate the *τεμενος* enclosed by high walls that no-one can climb, and start a process of movement and fusion which bring about the miracle, the

'maglia rotta' (v.15) and the 'fantasma che [...] salva' (v.12).¹³ Marlena Fabris (1984, p.103) has shown how all elements present within 'In limine' find within the same garden their opposite: 'orto' (v.5) is a place of fecundity and life, 'reliquiario' (v.5) is a place of death; 'volo' (v.6), a vital movement, finds its opposite in a telluric movement 'il commuoversi dell'eterno grembo' (v.7); solitude 'questo lembo / di terra solitario' (vv.8-9) becomes chaos 'rovello' (v.10). Within this duplicity of elements which give birth to each other, within the chaos which originates from the encounter of the four elements, the powers of the speaking voice, the possible creator (the poet), remain inactive. Indeed, the nature of the speaking voice is revealed as impotent; the changes operated within the text-garden are coincidental with the entrance of the reader-addressee who is completely responsible for his own salvation: the possibility of meeting 'il fantasma che [...] salva' (v.12) depends on whether he is capable of jumping out of the garden at the right moment, the moment when the 'maglia rotta' (v.15) can be found.

The process described in 'In limine' is the opposite to that described in 'Sul muro grafito':

Chi si ricorda più del fuoco ch'arse
 impetuoso
 nelle vene del mondo; - in un riposo
 freddo le forme, opache sono sparse.
 (vv.5-8, p.50)

In 'Sul muro grafito', the speaking voice considers that the familiar, somehow reassuring forms surrounding him do originate from live matter which has lost its impetuosity and turned itself into 'forme opache': the crucible has been

extinguished leaving in its stead what is known as reality. In 'In limine', however, the reliquary is turned into a melting pot, the 'forme opache' re-acquire their fluidity. It is at this point (the point of fluidity) that the speaking voice urges the reader-addressee to leap out of the garden. The moment when forms start turning into essence is the time when it is possible to find 'la maglia rotta' (v.15), when it is possible to flee the pre-determined order of things into some kind of freedom. The 'crogiuolo' (v.9) and, later, the 'rovello' (v.10) indicate the process whereby all may be created and all may be deleted, forms turn into matter and matter prepares to turn back into new forms: 'si compongono qui le storie, gli atti / scancellati pel giuoco del futuro' (vv.13-14). If the reader-addressee grasps the right moment then he will be able to break free and save himself. Failure to escape will result in being included in the fusion of matter within the melting-pot and in being re-crystallized into 'forme opache' ('Sul muro grafito', v.8, p.48) as part of the reliquary. The speaking voice cannot operate his own or the reader-addressee's salvation, but is left at the door as a guard-like or Shaman-like figure to the dimension beyond. Within the poem the dots may symbolize the repetition of the whole cycle of attraction of a new reader-addressee into the dynamics of 'In limine' and, thus, a new salvation. The role of the poet, and of poetry in general, is suggested to be that of indicating the way to a possible salvation from contingency.

The duplex nature of the *reliquiario-poem-orto* has clearly been shown both grammatically and symbolically within the text: the garden symbolizes the claustrophobic reality from where the speaking voice urges the addressee to escape, but also the space of poetic intuition and poetic vision which allow, even if momentarily, the reader-addressee to find 'la maglia rotta' (v.15) in the 'erto muro'

(v.10). However, there is a further duplicity that should be taken into account within the whole process of escape-salvation from the 'orto-vita': looking at both the metamorphoses of the 'orto' within the economy of the Montalian macro-text and the signals which are perceived from the Other-side of the wall, the binary oppositions 'orto'-life, 'reliquiario'-death, escape-salvation (from life?) lose their traditional and clear-cut symbolical meanings assuming, at times, opposite values and showing a fuzzier merging zone.¹⁴ The escape from one concept of time and space to an-Other via the *limen* is the route which I propose to follow in order to pursue the study of the linguistic and thematic dissolution of the Montalian text.

2.4 The vision of pure space

Montale's poetic voice takes shape from the Ligurian poetic experience and also from the Ligurian landscape, where he spent the first thirty years of his life.¹⁵ The Ligurian landscape is mountainous, dry, with very little space between the mountains and the sea: this landscape forges Montale's idea of space, right from his childhood, as narrow and enclosed, claustrophobic and refractory. He often speaks of the Ligurian land as his 'paesaggio universale': 'è curioso pensare che ognuno di noi ha un paese come questo, e sia pur diversissimo, che dovrà restare il *suo* paesaggio, immutabile; è curioso che l'ordine fisico sia così lento a filtrare in noi e poi così impossibile a scancellarsi' ('Dov'era il tennis...', p.215). Montale writes his first poem, 'Meriggiare pallido e assorto' in 1916. Later in 1946 he comments: 'Nel '16 avevo composto il primo frammento *tout entier à sa proie attaché*, "Meriggiare pallido e assorto" (che modificai più tardi nella strofa finale). La preda era, s'intende, il *mio* paesaggio' (Montale 1946, *Sulla poesia*, 1976, p.563). Montale's landscape

plays an important part in all his poetics and is the origin of his 'male di vivere' ('Spesso il male di vivere ho incontrato', v.1, p.33). By analyzing 'Merigiare pallido e assorto' (p.28) it is possible to have a clearer view of pure space detached from the dimension of time from both the deictic and the thematic point of view.

Merigiare pallido e assorto
presso un rovente muro d'orto,
ascoltare tra i pruni e gli sterpi
schiocchi di merli, frusci di serpi.

Nelle crepe del suolo o su la vecchia
spiar le file di rosse formiche
ch'ora si rompono ed ora s'intrecciano
a sommo di minuscole biche.

Osservare tra frondi il palpitare
lontano di scaglie di mare
mentre si levano tremuli scricchi
di cicale dai calvi picchi.

E andando nel sole che abbaglia
sentire con triste meraviglia
com'è tutta la vita e il suo travaglio 15
in questo seguitare una muraglia
che ha in cima cocci aguzzi di bottiglia.

Spatial deictics: 'questo' (v.16)

Temporal deictics:
None

Referential deictics:
 'i pruni' (v.3)
 'gli sterpi' (v.3)
 'nelle crepe' (v.5)
 'sulla vecchia' (v.5)
 'le file' (v.6)
 'dai calvi picchi' (v.12)
 'nel sole' (v.13)
 'questo' (v.16)

Origo deictics:
None

Syntactic deictics:
None

Discourse deictics:
'un rovente muro d'orto'
(v.2)
'una muraglia' (v.16)

Subjectivity deictics:
None

The text does not necessarily mobilize a speaking voice, even though the adjectives 'pallido' (v.1) and 'assorto' (v.1) may be interpreted as referring to a person who is

performing the actions of 'meriggiare' (v.1), 'ascoltare' (v.3), 'spiar' (v.6) and so forth. On the other hand, a reader may interpret the use of the masculine singular ending in the adjectives as emptied of any personal reference and with a neutral or impersonal value. The proximal demonstrative 'questo' may also identify a speaking voice which is positioned within the garden close to the wall right at the conclusion of the poem. It is a speaking voice, however, that continues to remain shyly hidden behind an impersonal type of narration. In this sense the re-created context can be read as an impersonal vision or experience of a land, which is turned into a universal metaphor of life.

The deictic structure of 'Meriggiare pallido e assorto' pivots around a number of infinitives which do not mobilize a temporal zero-point. The co-ordinate of time in this poem is not 'now', but an indefinite time, therefore all actions are unrestricted and non-deictic. The very first word of the poem is 'meriggiare' which derives from 'meriggio', i.e. noon (*meridies* in Latin). Meriggiare means to spend the hot hours of the afternoon resting in the shade.¹⁶ 'Meriggio' is, as already specified, noon which, conventionally, is the moment when the sun is at its highest position along the parabola curve which it describes in the sky or, in certain parts of the earth, at the zenith. It is the moment of the day that divides morning from afternoon. The transformation of a moment 'meriggio' into a durative action 'meriggiare' creates a sudden dilation within the concept of time. One moment has been transformed into a undefined period of time: in other words, the conventional concept of time has been stopped and the whole of the text floats in a world where only space exists. This sense of lingering of time is perfectly rendered in Italian by the indefinite use of infinitives and gerund of verbs. If both temporal and *origo* deictics are absent, the

poetic text is approachable only from the point of view of space. The only deictic which can be categorized as spatial is the demonstrative adjective 'questo' (v.16), the other deictic terms present within 'Meriggiare pallido e assorto' are referential deictics. This means that the spatial co-ordinates described in this poem are almost entirely indicated by referential deixis.

One of the images which was noted in 'In limine' is also present in this poem, i.e. the wall. The space within the text is represented as closed and limited by a garden wall, 'presso un rovente muro d'orto' (v.2). It has been seen that the concept of space in the Montalian universe presupposes a dichotomy between two different places: the place on 'this' side of the wall, the claustrophobic reliquario-orto, and the place 'beyond' the wall, the Other side. The 'other' side, what lies beyond the wall, has connotations of mystery and freedom in 'In limine' ('Il fantasma che [...] salva', v.12, p.5), but, as all our desires unequivocally imply, also of fear. In the Montalian fictional universe, the side beyond the wall is always far and unreachable ('Osservare tra frondi il palpitare / *lontano* di scaglie di mare', vv.9-10, my italics); the side of the wall where the garden is enclosed, is always limiting, but offers security.

The fictitious spatial dimension of the 'orto' is connoted by sights and sounds typical of a garden in the hot hours of the day. The presence of 'i pruni e gli sterpi' (v.3), 'scaglie di mare' (v.10) and 'calvi picchi' (v.12) depict the geographical setting of the region where Montale's 'orto' is: a harsh and refractory Liguria which becomes a symbol for reality. The definite articles '*i* pruni e *gli* sterpi' (v.3), '*dai* calvi picchi' (v.12), '*neile* crepe' (v.5), '*su la* vecchia' (v.5), '*le* file di rosse formiche' (v.6), which function as referential deictics, introduce the spatial-geographical connotations of the context to the reader as familiar ones. It has been argued that

definite articles do create shared knowledge in poetry, however, in the case of 'Meriggiare pallido e assorto' the context of the garden (and indirectly that of the Ligurian landscape) is already familiar as the reader-addressee has entered the Montalian universe of poetry through 'In limine' and, thus, through a garden. The mention of 'muro d'orto' (v.2) sets a known context and the definite articles (which create a reference by associative anaphora) identify referents which may be expected as being part of such a context. In this sense, it can be claimed that 'In limine' has created a poetic schema, the garden, which, once it is triggered in another text by lexical or linguistic signals, reveals shared knowledge and, thus, complicity between the speaking voice and the reader-addressee.¹⁷

The spatial dimensions in the text have been indicated by use of referential deixis. The demonstrative 'questo' (v.16) is the only indexical present within the text which has also a spatial deictic meaning. The abstract noun 'seguire' (v.16) can be read metaphorically as well as literally. I propose to include both readings within the interpretation of this text: the literal interpretation of 'seguire' refers textually to the spatial co-ordinates created by the poetic text (already set from 'In limine'); the metaphorical interpretation (strengthened by the noun phrases 'la vita e il suo travaglio', v.15) can be extended by the reader to the human condition in general, of life as suffering. In the first interpretation of the text the reader can assume a psychological distance from the context of utterance as an imagined situation; the second reading of the text implies a possible recognition by the reader of the context of fictional utterance with life in general. This creates a blur in the distinction between the real and the fictitious contexts, where any reader may become involved within the system of the spatial deixis. The involvement of the reader within the text

through the closeness implicated by the proximal demonstrative 'questo' (v.16) may be interpreted as empathy, making of 'questo' an empathetic deictic. The feeling of empathy created in the reader through the use of the proximal demonstrative 'questo' and the relationship of complicity between text and reader, attract him to take part in the dynamics of the poem. 'Merigiare pallido e assorto', however, cannot be considered as a dynamic text: nothing really happens, no transformation is involved as in 'In limine'. The garden remains the same throughout the text, even though a duplicity of the elements is signalled through the use of vocabulary.

It was said that in 'In limine' the reader-addressee was involved in the dynamics of the text by use of a set of imperatives of verbs which had a semantic sensory meaning. Likewise in 'Merigiare pallido e assorto' the reader is brought to reconstruct the spatial context with the help of sensory stimuli. The sense of hearing is evoked in 'schiocchi di merli, frusci di serpi' (vv.3-4) and in 'tremuli scricchi / di cicale' (vv.11-12): although these noun phrases are not defined by definite articles, they semantically complete the scene of the hot afternoon by adding unexpected sounds within a known and familiar garden setting. Although these sounds are familiar in a typical Mediterranean hot afternoon, in the deep silence of the background ('assorto', v.1) they appear, at the same time, as sinister sounds. The sense of sight is involved by contrast with the glaring light of the background ('pallido', v.1; 'nel sole che abbaglia', v.13) by the presence of colour: 'le file di rosse formiche' (v.6) and 'scaglie di mare' (v.10).

The 'muro d'orto' (v.2) is insurmountable ('erto muro' in 'In limine') and has sharp fragments of glass stuck on its top: life is, therefore, only possible within the claustrophobic garden. Despite the impossibility to leave the garden, it is,

nevertheless, recognized that the happier spatio-temporal dimension is that which lies beyond the wall: 'l'ora più bella è *di là* dal muretto / che rinchiude in un occaso scialbato' ('Gloria del disteso mezzogiorno', vv.7-8, p.37, my italics).

'Meriggiare pallido e assorto' represents an interesting example of the Montalian concept of space devoid of the temporal dimension, when the only elements which measure the length of the duration of the text are the repetitive sinister sounds of a landscape and a nature which are resting. Time stopping seems to be showing the hidden face of an inhuman 'orto-reliquiario', indeed the 'orto' turned back into a 'reliquiario', from which the addressee of 'In limine' has already escaped and where the almost impersonal speaking voice has lost his Shaman-like role.

2.5 A glimpse into the Other side.

'Fuscello teso dal muro...' (p.24) was added to the second edition of *Ossi di seppia* (1928) and was composed, together with 'Vento e bandiere', in 1927. The theme of space and time has, therefore, developed in comparison with the previous poems in *Ossi*.

Fuscello teso dal muro	
sì come l'indice d'una	
meridiana che scande la carriera	
del sole e la mia, breve;	
in una additi i crepuscoli	5
e alleghi sul tonaco	
che imbeve la luce d'accesi	
riflessi — e t'attedia la ruota	
che in ombra sul piano dispieghi,	
t'è noja infinita la volta	10
che stacca da te una smarrita	
sembianza come di fumo	
e grava con l'infittita	
sua cupola mai dissolta.	

Ma tu non adombri stamane 15
 più il tuo sostegno ed un velo
 che nella notte hai strappato
 a un'orda invisibile pende
 dalla tua cima e risplende
 i primi raggi. Laggiù, 20
 dove la piana si scopre
 del mare, un trealberi carico
 di ciurma e di preda reclina
 il bordo a uno spiro, e via scivola.
 chi è in alto e s'affaccia s'avvede 25
 che brilla la tolda e il timone
 nell'acqua non scava una traccia.

Spatial deictics:

'laggiù' (v.20)

'in alto' (v.25)

Origo deictics:

'fucello' (v.1)

'la mia' (v.4)

't'attedia' (v.8)

't'è noja' (v.10)

'te' (v.11)

'tu non adombri' (v.15)

'il tuo sostegno' (v.16)

'tua' (v.19)

Temporal deictics:

'non adombri' (v.15)

'stamane' (v.15)

'hai strappato' (v.17)

'pende' (v.18)

'risplende' (v.19)

'reclina' (v.23)

'scivola' (v.24)

'brilla' (v.26)

'scava' (v.27)

Referential deictics:

'dal muro' (v.1)

'sul tonaco' (v.6)

'la ruota' (v.8)

'sul piano' (v.9)

'la volta' (v.10)

'l'infittita sua cupola'

[(vv.13-14)]

'nella notte' (v.17)

'dalla tua cima' (v.19)

'il bordo' (v.24)

'il timone' (v.26)

'la tolda' (v.26)

Discourse deictics:

'dal muro' (v.1)

'la piana [...] / del mare'

vv.21-22)

Subjectivity deictics:

None

Syntactic deictics:

None

The text describes a 'fucello' which juts from a wall ('teso dal muro', v.1) and, like the needle of a sundial ('sì come l'indice d'una / meridiana', vv.2-3), functions as a time measurer ('che scande la carriera / del sole e la mia, breve', vv.3-4). The theme is that of time, or better, of the passage of time. The whole of the poem is written in the present tense. However, we can underline a difference between the implications of the use of the present tense in the first stanza and those of the present

tense in the second stanza. In the first stanza the use of the present does not function deictically; it describes, in fact, the twig in its habitual action of measuring time. The present tense, therefore, does not define a specific time co-ordinate. The action of measuring time is indefinite and infinite.

The use of *origo* deictics mobilizes a speaking voice ('la mia', v.4) and an addressee whose identity is clarified by the vocative 'fucello' (v.1) in the first stanza. The spatial co-ordinate denoting *here* is never specified within the first stanza, however, the spatial adverb 'laggiù' (v.20) in the second stanza evokes by contrast and *in absentia* a *here* dimension where the speaking voice and the addressee are placed.

The second-person pronouns and endings of verbs ('t'attedia', v.8; 'additi', v.5; 'allegghi', v.6; 'tu', v.15), and the vocative 'fucello' (v.1) foreground the central function of the twig within the fictitious context. The image created is that of a sundial needle repetitively and infinitely ('t'è noja infinita', v.10) projecting its shadow around itself in a semicircle ('e t'attedia la ruota / che in ombra sul piano dispiegghi', vv.8-9). If the temporal co-ordinate is not deictically defined, the spatial co-ordinate is precise as the definite article which accompanies and defines 'muro' ('dal muro', v.1) triggers once more the schema of the 'orto'. The speaking persona is always present within the metaphorical garden, however, it has been seen that the addressee has the power or choice to operate her own salvation.

The spatial co-ordinate is completed into the image of a closed space by the presence of 'la volta' (v.10) and 'l'infittita / sua cupola' (vv.13-14) both referring to the sky and thus locking both the 'fucello' and the speaking voice no longer within a garden, but within a *greenhouse* where access is denied also from the sky, where

the wind of fertility can no longer penetrate. The twig is, therefore, prisoner of the spatial co-ordinates and subjected not only to the infinite flow of time, but to the function of measuring it.

The very first line of the second verse suddenly introduces a defined temporal co-ordinate through the temporal adverb 'stamane' (v.15). The co-ordinate of time is, thus, focused upon. It may be further observed that a breach in the continuous flow of time of the first stanza has also been brought about by the presence of a negative intra-textual reference, 'tu non adombri stamane' (v.15).¹⁸ Time has ceased to flow, or the twig has stopped measuring it. Focus is now centred on the twig and on the veil ('un velo', v.16) which hangs from it: the twig has torn a veil from an invisible herd during the night ('ed un velo / che nella notte hai strappato / a un'orda invisibile pende / dalla tua cima', vv.16-19). It seems that this veil which hangs from the twig is the witness of a change which has taken place during the night, i.e. the sudden breach within the indefinite flow of time or the fact that the twig is no longer measuring time. The change seems to have happened somewhere between the first and the second stanzas. We may assume that the blank line which divides the two stanzas bears a significance within the fictitious context of 'Fuscello teso dal muro'. Within the blank space it may be assumed that the phase of the *limen* has occurred. In line 20 a new spatial deictic is introduced: 'Laggiù' (v.20). This creates a double dimension of space within the poem, a space which is far away from where the twig is positioned. This new spatial dimension is that of the sea: 'dove la piana si scopre / del mare' (vv.21-22), which is an image which Montale used extensively in other poems (it will suffice to mention *Mediterraneo*). It may be noted that the spatial dimensions of the fictitious context are defined by two constant images in the

Montalian poetry: the wall and the sea. The wall bears the connotations of imprisonment, the sea symbolizes freedom from the claustrophobic garden of life: they both trigger poetic schemata which imply high symbolical meanings.

It will soon become clear to the reader that the space identified by the sea functions according to abnormal natural laws. A 'trealberi' (v.22) is introduced in the context of the poem and is described as being full of crew and prey, but, despite its weight, as slipping away ('reclina / il bordo a uno spiro, e via scivola', vv.23-24). Moreover, whoever is high up and looks out realizes that the rudder is not leaving any wake in the water ('il timone / nell'acqua non scava una traccia', vv.26-27). It is obvious that the space co-ordinates defined by the sea are quite deviant from the space characteristics of reality: the natural law of friction seems to be non-functional. Besides, the presence of the three-master creates a sinister image of a pirate vessel or a ghost vessel.

On the one hand, in the second stanza of this poem, the time co-ordinate is operating as a precise moment within the fictitious context, on the other hand, the spatial co-ordinates are altered in order to transform the space of imprisonment of the first stanza into a space of apparent freedom from the boundaries of time which, however, is connoted by alien characteristics and a sinister presence. Once time ceases to flow the spatial characteristics change dramatically. What may have happened in the blank line between the first and the second stanzas is not explicitly recounted. However, since there is a shift of focus on space within the context of the poem (from the wall, where the twig is placed, to the sea), we could assume that vision of the other side has been unveiled to the poetic persona. The idea of salvation which had been promised by the speaking voice in 'In limine' has been revealed as

having a twofold nature: hopeful and sinister, paradise-like and hellish. A doubt is raised over the nature of the salvation promised by the poetic voice in 'In limine' which, as we have seen, is the voice which establishes a direct contact with the reader. In fact, the poetic voice did not promise salvation, rather persuaded the reader-addressee to try to escape from the *hortus conclusus* to a possible salvation. The sentence structure (i.e. the 'if' clause) and the presence of the doubt adverb 'forse' can now be read in their ambiguity. If climbing over the wall means to get out of the spatio-temporal dimensions of reality, into an unreality or 'counter-reality' which bear characteristics of a twofold nature (paradise or hell?) then the poetic voice was not promising, but rather challenging the reader-addressee. Going beyond the wall means to step into a 'counter-reality' which may be salvation or damnation, but to step out of a situation which is neither negative nor positive: out of a limbo situation. Reality is then a 'limbo squallido / delle monche esistenze' ('Crisalide', vv.37-38, p.85), by definition, a place where one is neither taking part in the infinite splendour and love of God, nor is being punished by His justice. Within Montale's completely lay universe, reality is described as a limbo-like space where man is suspended within nothingness and is totally impotent, but where hope seems to have a supporting value in his search for an alternative type of salvation.

2.6 Reality as a limbo dimension

In the poems which I have analyzed, the linguistic structure of the text has been seen to imply the presence of a duplex spatial dimension within its context and the possibility of a passage from one dimension to the other which may occur only under certain circumstances. In Montale's texts the addressee is often pictured in the

process of leaping over the wall (in 'Falsetto', pp.12-13, or in 'Di un natale metropolitano', p.224), or coming from the Other side back into the secure garden (in 'Ti libero la fronte dai ghiaccioli', p.144) or absent and therefore outside the garden (in 'La speranza di pure rivederti', p.138, or in 'La casa dei doganieri', p.161). The speaking voice, on the other hand, does not leave the garden and if he leans out sometimes he is strongly rooted to the edge of the garden boundaries so as to avoid falling into the Other side:

ora son io
 l'agave che s'abbarbica al crepaccio
 dello scoglio
 e sfugge al mare da le braccia d'alghie
 che spalanca ampie gole e abbranca rocce.
 ('L'agave su lo scoglio', vv.15-19, p.68)

The speaking voice recognizes his 'delirio [...] d'immobilità' ('Arsenio', v.23, p.81) as a torment, his impossibility of 'infinatarsi' ('Casa sul mare', v.22, p.91, my change) as his destiny. Nevertheless, the speaking voice is often pictured as protruding towards the Other side of the garden wall: the fascination with the unknown often leads the poetic persona to dwell in spatial and temporal positions 'on the edge', between the sacred garden and the space outside it.¹⁹ I have already referred to this in-between area as the *limen* where many of the Montalian poetic situations take place (see section 2.3, p.46).

If the speaking voice does not want to leave the *orto-reliquiario*, stepping from one side of the garden to the other does not necessarily bring the salvation hoped for the addressee, and this becomes clear in a late text of *Ossi di seppia* 'I morti' (1926).²⁰

Il mare che si frange sull'opposta
 riva vi leva un nembo che spumeggia
 finché la piana lo riassorbe. Quivi
 gettammo un dì sulla ferrigna costa,
 ansante più del pelago la nostra 5
 speranza! — e il gorgo sterile verdeggia
 come ai dì che ci videro fra i vivi.

Or che aquilone spiana il groppo torbido
 delle salse correnti e le rivolge
 d'onde trassero, attorno alcuno appende 10
 ai rami cedui reti dilunganti
 sul viale che discende
 oltre lo sguardo;
 reti stinte che asciuga il tocco tardo
 e freddo della luce; e sopra queste 15
 denso il cristallo dell'azzurro palpebra
 e precipita a un arco d'orizzonte
 flagellato.

Più d'alga che trascini
 il ribollio che a noi si scopre, muove 20
 tale sosta la nostra vita: turbina
 quanto in noi rassegnato a' suoi confini
 risté un giorno; tra i fili che congiungono
 un ramo all'altro si dibatte il cuore
 come la gallinella 25
 di mare che s'insacca tra le maglie;
 e immobili e vaganti ci ritiene
 una fissità gelida.

Così
 forse anche ai morti è tolto ogni riposo 30
 nelle zolle: una forza indi li tragge
 spietata più del vivere, ed attorno,
 larve rimorse dai ricordi umani,
 li volge fino a queste spiagge, fiati
 senza materia o voce 35
 traditi dalla tenebra; ed i mozzi
 loro voli ci sfiorano pur ora
 da noi divisi appena e nel crivello
 del mare si sommergono...

Spatial deictics:

Temporal deictics:

Referential deictics:

'quivi' (v.3)	'gettammo' (v.4)	'il mare' (v.1)
'vi' (v.2)	'un dì' (v.4)	'sull'opposta riva'
'd'onde' (v.10)	'videro' (v.7)	(vv.1-2)
'indi' (v.31)	'or' (v.8)	'la piana' (v.3)
	'muove' (v.20)	'lo' (v.3)
Origo deictics:	'turbina' (v.21)	'sulla [...] costa' (v.4)
'nostra' (v.5)	'risté' (v.23)	'il gorgo' (v.6)
'ci' (v.7)	'un giorno' (v.23)	'il groppo' (v.8)
'a noi' (v.20)	'si dibatte' (v.24)	'delle salse correnti' (v.9)
'la nostra vita' (v.21)	'ritiene' (v.27)	'ai rami' (v.11)
'in noi' (v.22)		'sul viale' (v.12)
'ci' (v.27)	Subjectivity deictics:	'il ribollio' (v.20)
'da noi' (v.38)	None	'i fili' (v.23)
		'ai morti' (v.30)
Discourse deictics:	Syntactic deictics:	'nelle zolle' (v.31)
'il mare' (v.1)	None	'li' (v.31)
'del mare' (v.39)		'li' (v.31)
		'queste' (v.34)
		'loro' (v.37)
		'nel crivello' (v.38)
		'del mare' (v.39)

The poem opens with a metaphor which summarizes the whole poem. The sea, the force brought in by the fertilizing wind in 'In limine' ('ondata della vita', v.2, p.5), is strongly reminiscent of the Father-entity celebrated in *Mediterraneo* which reveals itself as being Creator, but also Destroyer:

Dissipa tu se lo vuoi
 questa debole vita che si lagna,
 come la spugna il frego
 effimero di una lavagna.
 ('Dissipa tu se lo vuoi', vv.1-4, p.59)

As in *Mediterraneo*, in 'I morti' the sea is the origin and destiny ('il mare', v.1; 'del mare', v.39) of the dead who emerge from it and come back to the shore ('sull'opposta / riva', vv.1-2) the place where they spent their time known as life, and finally return to it: 'e nel crivello del mare si sommergono' (vv.38-39). The presence

of marine metaphors all along the text characterizes the space between the land and the sea where 'i morti' have come and brought with them signs of the afterlife.

'Il mare' triggers a schema already well established in the Montalian universe, as has been seen in 'Meriggiare pallido e assorto' and in '*Fuscello teso dal muro...*', let alone *Mediterraneo*. The definite article which defines 'l'opposta riva' functions as an associative anaphora and identifies the shore opposed to that where the dead dwell (as if the sea was dividing the dead from the living). The definite reference to 'l'opposta riva' (a place more or less far to reach) soon is turned into the spatial deictic reference: the adverb 'quivi' (v.3). The initial scene mobilizes a spatio-temporal zero-point which includes a *quivi-ora* as specified by the use of verbs in the present tense: 'si frange' (v.1), 'vi leva' (v.2) and 'riassorbe' (v.3).

The scene is changed temporally in line four by the past historic 'gettammo' and by the temporal adverb 'un dì' (v.4) which next with the past historic acquires the meaning of 'a long time ago'. The past tense 'gettammo' and the temporal adverb 'un dì' function as temporal deictics; 'gettammo' also reveals the deictic centre 'noi', i.e. 'i morti'. The spatio-temporal zero-point of lines four to six is recognized as a *noi-quivi-un dì* where coding time is separate from content time. The verb 'gettare' (in the sense of 'gettare l'ancora') can be read as 'arrivare' and the appositional value of the utterance 'ansante più del pelago la nostra / speranza!' (vv.5-6) reveals a strong tension towards life: in this sense arrival to the coast-life, the place of forms, from the fluidity of the sea, is connoted by hope.²¹

Coding time and content time are separate only between lines four and five, when the dead are recounting the event of their original arrival on the 'ferrigna costa' (v.4), content and coding times resume identity when a new temporal shift (from the past

historic back to the present) takes place in line 6: 'il gorgo sterile verdeggia'. 'Il gorgo' (v.6) is still green ('verdeggia', v.6) as it was when ('come ai dì', v.7) the deictic centre 'i morti' were amongst the living ('fra i vivi', v.7). Line 7 contains another temporal shift back to a past historic 'ci videro', which again refers to the time when the dead were on the 'ferrigna costa' (v.4), i.e. when they were alive. The three temporal shifts present within the first stanza create double temporal dimensions which are opposed to each other and underline the existence conditions of the dead before and after death. A double set of temporal dimensions were noted in 'In limine' as a consequence of the influence of the wind which brought into the sacred garden 'l'ondata della vita' (v.2, p.5). In 'I morti' the sea has brought in a wave which has carried with it the dead ('Il mare che si frange sull'opposta / riva vi leva un nembo che spumeggia', vv.1-2): their arrival at the 'ferrigna costa' (v.4) has brought an 'ondata di morte' and its consequences will soon become clear.

In the first line of the new stanza we meet a new spatial deictic: 'or' (v.8). The present dimension defined in the second stanza presents quite a different scene from that of the first stanza: 'aquilone' blows and the sea, which was previously rough, becomes calm. 'Aquilone' is a strong cold wind which blows from the North (Battaglia 1966ff, I, p.604; Devoto and Oli 1967, p.166). Suddenly the presence of this wind changes the scene: before, the coast was beaten by the rough sea ('il mare che si frange sull'opposta / riva vi leva un nembo che spumeggia', vv.1-2); now, the landscape becomes quiet ('or che aquilone spiana il groppo torbido / delle salse correnti', vv.8-9) and practically deserted ('attorno alcuno appende / ai rami cedui reti dilunganti', vv.10-11). If the 'ondata della vita' of 'In limine' transforms the reliquary into a melting-pot, in 'I morti' the 'ondata della morte' freezes the shore

and turns it into a limbo-like 'lembo / di terra solitario' ('In limine', vv.8-9, p.5) where the dead get trapped 'come la gallinella / di mare che s'insacca tra le maglie' (vv.25-26).

The dimension denoted by the present tense (i.e. the 'existential' condition of the dead) in the text 'I morti' assumes negative connotations if compared to the dimension which is denoted by the past historic: the past dimension was connoted by hope, 'ansante più del pelago la nostra / speranza' (vv.5-6), the present dimension is connoted by stasis, 'muove tale sosta la nostra / vita' (vv.20-21). The verb 'muove' can be interpreted literally as 'producing a movement' which again reminds of the 'commuoversi' (v.7) of the earth in 'In limine'.²² A condition of stasis is capable of moving the choral poetic voice's existence in such fashion that the inner energy which one day ceased to fight and surrendered 'a' suoi confini' (v.22), is now re-ignited. 'Il rovello' of 'In limine' has not extinguished itself. The feeling of resignation to their limits as insurmountable (the 'erto muro', the limited condition of humans) which the choral speaking voice may have had whilst they were alive, now transforms itself into tension to escape from the 'rete / che [...] stringe' ('In limine', vv.15-16, p.5) even for the dead. The image of 'la gallinella di mare' which is bagged in the meshes indicates the lively state of mind of the dead who are still prisoners within a cold deadlock ('e immobili e vaganti ci ritiene / una fissità gelida', vv.27-28) even after death. If even the dead, who figuratively should have been able to leave the *orto-reliquiario*, are trapped within a claustrophobic reality, then leaving the sacred garden perhaps does not coincide with salvation, but with a perpetuation of the same living condition present within the 'orto'.

As from line 29 a new speaking voice takes over the narration. The dead have ceased to speak frozen in their limbo-like existence, unable to leave the reality that traps the dead as well as the living. A first-person plural pronoun 'noi' (v.38) mobilizes the new deictic centre. The adverb 'così' (v.29) reveals the structure of the whole poem as being that of a simile, where the condition of existence of the dead is compared to that of the living, although the presence of the adverb 'forse' (v.30) gives the simile a doubtful accent. The new deictic centre clearly indicates the point of view of the living, if the dead are now referred to by third-person pronouns: 'una forza indi li tragge' (v.31), 'li volge fino a queste spiagge' (v.34), 'ed i mozzi / loro voli ci sfiorano' (vv.36-37). The presence of the proximal demonstrative 'queste spiagge' (v.34), which functions both as referential and spatial deictic, indicates that both the living and the dead are in similar existential conditions. The dead are in fact in a worse position than the living as death has not freed them from 'la rete' of time and space: they constantly come back and linger in the same space as 'larve rimorse dai ricordi umani' (v.33) pining for their past.²³

The use of deixis in this text has shown interesting aspects of the structure of the Montalian idea of stepping out of the garden of life. What previously had been described as a binary system including here-and-beyond, now-and-then, or time-and-lack-of-time, with a stressed preference for the second dimension, is now given a new perspective. If '*Fuscello teso dal muro...*' showed how stepping out of the convention of time brings spatial changes which bear a twofold nature, we now hear the point of view of the dead who are obliged to dwell in the space outside the garden. The perspective of the dead is not much different from that of the living. The two dimensions which seemed to be separated by an insurmountable wall, are in fact

just separated ('divisi appena' v.38) and both sides of the wall are flattened to a static limbo where both the dead and the living are immobile and unable to escape.

The spatial deictic 'quivi' (v.3) denotes the only possible space for the living and the dead. However, time seems to offer more answers than space. Within the structure of the poem two separate temporal dimensions have been highlighted: a present dimension (the time of disappointment for the dead, the time of doubtful hope for the living) and a past dimension (the time of hope for the dead). If there is no freedom from space, as has been seen in 'Meriggiare pallido e assorto' there may be some hope in the temporal dimension.

Stopping time is perhaps an answer: the 'fucello' stops measuring time in '*Fucello teso dal muro*'; Gerti brings back her watch to revive a private time which cannot come back; the vision of a 'vasto, / interminato giorno' (vv.19-20, p.173) is pictured in 'Barche sulla Marna'. Retrieving time is another way of fighting it, of derailing somehow from the mono-directional flow of time: but retrieving time means stopping the loss of memory which changes man and his history. The loss of memory is a theme which is central in *Occasioni* which offer a few interesting texts where the dimension of time can be studied closely. In the next and concluding section of this chapter I propose to analyze 'La casa dei doganieri', a text which may help us conclude this journey into the Montalian spatio-temporal dimensions.

2.7 Time, memory and poetic knowledge

The theme of memory (or lack of memory) seems to be taking over the theme of the symbolical Ligurian space at some point towards the end of *Ossi di seppia* and the beginning of *Occasioni*. This is clearer in 'Vento e bandiere' (the predecessor of 'La

casa dei doganieri'), a poem which Montale had composed in 1927 and which was added to the Ribet edition of *Ossi di seppia*.

The effort to step out of the spatio-temporal net as an answer to the search of an interpretation of reality has shown that the dissolution of the space is practically impossible. Those who are no longer part of the spatio-temporal reality (the dead, for example) are still prisoners of the same spatial dimensions and are tortured by their past memories. Memory is the area of the human mind where the past of a person is registered and where, therefore, lies his identity. If the dead of 'I morti' are 'larve rimorse dai ricordi umani' ('I morti', v.33, p.93), then they are still prisoners of the temporal dimension, i.e. of their past temporal dimension. Forgetting could be, at first consideration, a way to free oneself from the weight of time.

From the *Occasioni* onwards, we find that the lack of memory theme is present in most of the poems not as a solution, but as a further aspect of the impossibility of knowledge. It has been shown that it is impossible to step out of the spatial dimension because climbing over the high wall does not bring us to a new space, but implicates the same space, under a new perspective (paradise-like or hellish). This place, though, is no more dynamic than the limbo where the living (or those who have not left the sacred garden) dwell.

Memory is a necessary element in the Montalian process of knowledge of reality and in the soterial nature of his concept of poetry and 'La casa dei doganieri' shows that lack of memory can only bring to confusion and total loss of identity. I propose an analysis of 'La casa dei doganieri' where the structure of the deictic system in the text combined with semantic negation suggest a possible linguistic and thematic dissolution of the text.

Tu non ricordi la casa dei doganieri
sul rialzo a strapiombo sulla scogliera:
desolata t'attende dalla sera
in cui v'entrò lo sciame dei tuoi pensieri
e vi sostò irrequieto.

5

Libeccio sferza da anni le vecchie mura
e il suono del tuo riso non è più lieto:
la bussola va impazzita all'avventura
e il calcolo dei dadi più non torna.
Tu non ricordi; altro tempo frastorna
la tua memoria; un filo s'addipana.

10

Ne tengo ancora un capo; ma s'allontana
la casa e in cima al tetto la banderuola
affumicata gira senza pietà.
Ne tengo un capo; ma tu resti sola
né qui respiri nell'oscurità.

15

Oh l'orizzonte in fuga, dove s'accende
rara la luce della petroliera!
Il varco è qui? (Ripullula il frangente
ancora sulla balza che scoscende...).

20

Tu non ricordi la casa di questa
mia sera. Ed io non so chi va e chi resta.

Spatial deictics:

'v'entrò' (v.4)
'vi' (v.25)
'qui' (v.16)
'qui' (v.19)
'questa' (v.21)

Origo deictics:

'tu' (v.1,10,21)
'ricordi' (v.1)
't'attende' (v.3)
'tuoi' (v.4)
'tuo' (v.7)
'tua' (v.11)
'tengo' (v.12,15)
'tu' (v.15)
'resti' (v.15)
'respiri' (v.16)
'mia' (v.22)

Temporal deictics:

'ricordi' (v.1,10,21)
'entrò' (v.4)
'sostò' (v.5)
'frastorna' (v.7)
'tengo' (v.12,15)
'resti' (v.15)
'respiri' (v.16)
's'accende' (v.17)
'ripullula' (v.19)
'so' (v.22)
'va' (v.22)
'resta' (v.22)

Discourse deictics:

'il frangente' (v.19)
'sulla balza' (v.20)

Referential deictics:

'la casa' (v.1)
'sul rialzo' (v.2)
'sulla scogliera' (v.2)
'dalla sera' (v.3)
'lo sciame' (v.4)
'le vecchie mura' (v.6)
'il suono' (v.7)
'la bussola' (v.8)
'il calcolo dei dadi' (v.9)
'la casa' (v.13)
'al tetto' (v.13)
'la banderuola' (v.13)
'nell'oscurità' (v.24)
'l'orizzonte' (v.17)
'la luce' (v.18)
'della petroliera' (v.18)
'il varco' (v.19)
'il frangente' (v.19)

Origo deictics:

'so' (v.2)

Syntactic deictics:

'il varco è qui?' (v.19)

Referential deictics:

'sulla balza' (v.20)

'questa' (v.21)

Subjectivity deictics:

None

Negations:

'non ricordi' (v.1,10,21)

'non è più lieto' (v.7)

'più non torna' (v.9)

'né qui respiri' (v.16)

'io non so' (v.22)

This poem starts with a second-person pronoun which functions as an *origo* deictic: 'tu' (v.1) and which introduces the addressee of the poem and identifies by contrast the 'io' of the speaking voice. There follows a present tense in the negative 'non ricordi' (v.1) which sets the temporal co-ordinates of the poetic context: content time is in the present (and coincides with coding time) thus the deictic centre mobilized is a *now-and-here* ('qui', v.16) dimension. However, though an addressee is identified linguistically, the poetic voice is alone within the spatio-temporal context created by the poem, as his woman not only is not there ('desolata t'attende dalla sera', v.3; 'né qui respiri nell'oscurità', v.16), but is psychologically distant from the speaking voice, as remembering entails a psychological closeness to particular events which, in this case, were shared with the poetic voice. Wherever the addressee is, the poetic voice tries to establish a contact with her. Nevertheless this contact is sought through a lack of memory expressed by the frequent negations. It could be said that the poetic voice establishes a one-sided contact with his addressee.

Temporally, the scene is set in the present: whilst for the addressee it is a present of forgetfulness, for the poetic voice it is a present pivoting around past memories. The definite article 'la' functions as a referential deictic and introduces 'la casa dei doganieri' (v.1). The use of the definite article 'la' underlines shared knowledge

between the speaking voice and the addressee and identifies the shore-watchers' house as a place where they have spent time together: this establishes a possible complicity and familiarity between speaker and addressee.²⁴ Its position is spatially and geographically defined by two further referential deictics: 'sul rialzo a strapiombo sulla scogliera' (v.2). If the addressee could remember and the contact could be established, then the reference to the house of the customs men would be successful. However, the addressee has forgotten about that house, thus no relationship of complicity can be established and everything that was familiar before now becomes new and alien. Whilst a spatio-temporal scene is being defined by the poetic voice, the addressee cannot identify it as, being absent and having lost her memory, does not receive the speaker's utterance and even if she did, she would not be able to process it correctly, i.e. remember.

New temporal perspectives are created in lines 3-5, where a temporally remote 'sera' (v.3) is indicated by the past historic 'v'entrò' (v.4) and 'vi sostò' (v.5). The deictic structure of the poem reveals a double temporal dimension which includes a present of loneliness for the speaking voice opposed to a past of happiness together with the addressee. But the addressee has forgotten about the house and other memories connected to that part of her life, therefore her present psychological condition does not include the double temporal perspective described by the speaking voice: 'altro tempo frastorna / la tua memoria' (vv.10-11).

The place particle 'vi' positioned before the verbs in the past historic: 'v'entrò' and 'vi sostò' also highlights the presence of a double spatial dimension. 'Vi' in Italian means 'there' (Devoto and Oli 1967, p.1519), as opposed to 'ci' which can mean either 'here' or 'there' (Devoto and Oli 1967, p.545). The spatio-temporal setting of

the poem can be seen to refer to two spatio-temporal dimensions i.e. a *here-and-now* in opposition to a *there-and-then*. The spatial dimension, the house of the customs men, which geographically is the same house, on the same 'scogliera', is now desolate because the addressee has ceased to go there and, more significantly, has forgotten about it. From the speaking voice's point of view, the spatial dimension of the house of the happy past, when he was together with the addressee, is defined by the particle 'vi' and by the past historic and therefore interpretable as the house of 'quella sera' (v.3, my change). Towards the end of the poem, the house is re-interpreted as 'la casa di questa / mia sera' (vv.21-22). The spatial dimension seems to be influenced by the dynamics of the temporal dimensions: I suggest that, despite the double use of spatial deictics, the speaking voice is in the shore-watchers' house but perceives it as two separate poetic spaces: the happy house of the past and the desolate house of the present.

The verbs in the present tense found in lines 6-10 are governed by the complement 'da anni' (v.6) which functions as a temporal adverb and suggests that the present tense describes durational actions. Durational sentences do not have a deictic value, therefore lines 6-10 temporally have a descriptive value, describing precisely what has been happening to the shore-watchers' house since the addressee has stopped going there: 'libeccio sferza da anni le vecchie mura' (v.6), 'il suono del tuo riso non è più lieto' (v.7), 'la bussola va impazzita all'avventura' (v.8) and 'il calcolo dei dadi più non torna' (v.9). 'Tu non ricordi' (v.10) is repeated for the second time. This is the central line of the whole poem — the line that is responsible for the crisis which lies at the heart of the lyric. In the same line the adjective 'altro' follows. Although adjectives do not usually function as deictics, I would argue that this adjective does

partially as the spatial adverb 'fuori' did in 'In limine'. 'Altro tempo' (v.10), as opposed to 'dalla sera / in cui' (vv.3-4), i.e. 'quel tempo', refers to the lapse of time between 'la sera / in cui v'entrò lo sciame dei tuoi pensieri / e vi sostò irrequieto' (vv.3-5) and the present temporal dimension, i.e. the time of forgetfulness. Although the adjective 'altro' functions partially as a deictic, it does not refer to something in particular, as it leaves the temporal reference indefinite. Despite this, it still manages to differentiate 'altro tempo' from the past connected to the shore-watchers' house: it, therefore, functions more as a negative reference because it expresses the opposite of 'that time', i.e. 'not that time'. 'Altro tempo' has caused the addressee to forget about her past: 'altro tempo' summarizes the events during the course of time that have separated (physically and psychologically) the addressee from the poetic voice. The addressee has not forgotten the shore-watchers' house suddenly, but has done so gradually, as 'altro tempo' has taken over in importance and 'frastorna' (v.10) the addressee's memory.

The process of forgetting is symbolized by the metaphor of the spool around which 'un filo s'addipana' (v.11). The present tense 's'addipana' has a durational value as it refers to the span of time between the happy past and the lonely present. But what is the nature of the time between the past and the present? Whilst the past was spatio-temporally set quite clearly in connection with the house of the customs men, which is geographically and deictically defined ('sul rialzo a strapiombo sulla scogliera', v.2), confusion follows the moment that the addressee stops going to the house. The addressee somehow functioned as a compass in the speaking voice's life: once she has gone and forgotten the concept of direction is lost. Since the woman has left and forgotten 'la bussola va impazzita all'avventura' (v.8). But when does a compass go

crazy? In one situation: when the person who is using it is approaching or is already at the magnetic pole. It is very unlikely that the spatial situation of the poetic text is set at the magnetic pole. If the compass no longer points north and spins around because it has gone crazy, and if the calculation of the dice no longer makes sense, something catastrophic has happened to the geographical and mathematical conventions set by man in order to know (or to think he knows) the space and time where he exists: more importantly to know that he does exist. In *'Fuscello teso dal muro...'* when the sundial had stopped measuring time, some unusual phenomena had been noticed in connection with the space beyond the wall, i.e. the sea where the three-master was sailing. Is *'la casa dei doganieri'*, which is placed on the edge between land and sea, a place of passage between the sacred garden and the reality beyond the wall? May the reader assume that in *'La casa dei doganieri'* some similar phenomena happen in proximity of the *'varco'*?

Though the speaking voice holds on to the thread of memory, the past keeps receding *'s'allontana'* (v.12). The structure of temporal deixis has indicated two specific temporal dimensions opposed to each other: the happy past with the woman and the lonely present without her. Deixis, however, indicates another temporal opposition: the unhappy lonely (deictic) present of hope and persistence (*'ne tengo ancora un capo'*, v.12, and *'il varco è qui?'*, v.19) set against the merciless, inevitable and continuous action of time (expressed by non-deictic present tense) which is symbolized by the spinning weathervane: *'la banderuola / affumicata gira senza pietà'* (vv.13-14). In this situation of crisis, the speaking voice is trying to hold on to his past through a connection *'un filo'* (v.11), a thread of memory which the addressee has already let go *'ma tu resti sola'* (v.15). The past recedes (*'s'allontana /*

la casa', vv.12-13) and the wheel of time keeps turning 'senza pietà' (v.14): the speaking voice is alone within the walls of the house of the customs men, in a metaphorical personal zone, temporally, between past and (forgetful) future, and, spatially, between sea and land. The house is beaten by the winds, therefore the house becomes a refuge, but the compass no longer works and darkness surrounds all ('né qui respiri nell'oscurità', v.16). The security of the garden is challenged, the same garden from which the speaking voice had urged the addressee to escape. In 'La casa dei doganieri' the addressee has escaped beyond the wall and is perhaps sending some signs back to the speaking voice: 'Oh l'orizzonte in fuga, dove s'accende / rara la luce della petroliera!' (vv.17-18).²⁵ The horizon, where 'la petroliera' (v.18) is (both 'orizzonte' and 'petroliera' are identified by definite articles which function as referential deictics), identifies the Other-dimension. Should the intermittent light of the oil-tanker be interpreted as a positive sign of salvation beyond the wall, or as a warning not to leave the garden of life? The presence of the oil-tanker, which reminds us of the three-master in '*Fuscello teso dal muro...*' (an indirect intertextual reference to Coleridge's Life-in-Death status of the 'Ancient Mariner'? That kind of salvation?), must have looked quite an unfamiliar and scary monster of progress in 1930, as much as the train must have done to Blake in the 19th century as witnessed by 'The tiger'. The signal from the Other-side has once more revealed to have a twofold nature and frightens as much as it tempts.

In the last stanza the poetic voice has temporarily shifted his attention to a more private and personal concept of time and space: the spatio-temporal setting is no longer pivoting around the absence of the addressee, or her forgetfulness of the shore-watchers' house, but is focused on the horizon and on the presence of the oil-

tanker. The shore-watchers' house, which is situated on top of the cliffs vertical to the seashore, is indeed on the verge between land and sea, between the known and the unknown. Tension towards the horizon and the unknown is strong: 'Il varco è qui?' the speaking voice asks himself. The question 'Il varco è qui?' (functioning as a syntactic deictic) mobilizes an addressee, however this addressee does not coincide with the woman-addressee identified by the second-person pronoun 'tu' in lines 1-16, rather with a double-self of the speaking voice. The whole of the poem is indeed a monologue, but whilst lines 1-16 searched a possible contact through the thread of memory with the woman addressee, such a thread breaks between lines 16 and 17 (anticipated by 'tu resti sola', v.15), and from line 17 the speaking voice remains consciously alone.

Has the speaking voice reached the 'varco'? Has he found the broken mesh? Does he get his chance to leave the house and 'infinatarsi'? The compass registers vicinity to a magnetic field which could be interpreted as the barrier between *here* and *there*. The speaking voice (presumably) looks down from the shore-watchers' house in search for a further sign and Lo! What does he see? The sea breaking on the seashore: 'Ripullula il frangente / ancora sulla balza che scoscende...' (vv.19-20). No sign is seen, only emptiness, the drop, the usual seashore. The 'schermo d'immagini' ('La speranza di pure rivederti', v.4, p.144) does not open for the Montalian speaking voice, and when it does, in brief moments of being, it soon closes without permitting passage to the Other-side.

The poem closes with the repeated line 'Tu non ricordi' (v.21), but this repetition does not indicate resumption from the speaking voice of the same initial psychological state of mind. The demonstrative 'questa' (v.21), acting as a spatial

and referential deictic, stands out by opposition with the referential deictic in line 3 'desolata t'attende dalla sera / in cui...' which was interpreted as 'da quella sera'. The line 'Tu non ricordi' (v.21) is therefore concluding and disillusioned if the house of the customs men has become 'la casa di questa / mia sera' (vv.21-22) rather than 'la casa di quella (tua, or even nostra) sera'. The opposition is stressed further by the use of different possessives: 'la sera / [...] dei *tuoi* pensieri' (vv.3-4, my italics) and 'questa / *mia* sera' (vv.21-22, my italics). The change of *origo* deictic indicates the change in the point of view of the poem: although it is still the same speaking voice that is the zero-point of the poetic communication, the use of 'mia' (v.22) as opposed to 'tua' or 'nostra', in *enjambement* position with the proximal demonstrative 'questa' (v.21), underlines the surrender of the speaking voice. If the speaking voice was holding on to the thread of memory between lines 1-16, 'questa / mia' (vv.21-22) reveals that the speaking voice has resolved the situation by cutting the psychological link with the addressee.

Negation which was connected to the non-remembrance of the addressee throughout the poem ('tu non ricordi', v.1, 10, 21; 'il suono del tuo riso non è più lieto', v.7; 'né qui respiri nell'oscurità', v.16) is now also connected to the speaking voice: 'ed io non so chi va e chi resta' (v.22). The use of the first-person pronoun 'io', which functions as an *origo* deictic, has a foregrounded position in the sentence. When personal pronouns are explicitly used in Italian, it is to underline the foregrounded meaning of the person it refers to: in this case the speaking voice. This is the only occurrence of the first-person pronoun 'io' in the whole text and is in strong opposition to the second-person pronoun 'tu' which is repeated throughout the fictitious text. As the possessive adjective 'tuoi' (v.4) and the referential deictic

'dalla sera' (v.3) interpretable as 'quella sera', at the beginning of the poem, are substituted by 'questa' (v.21) and 'mia' (v.22), 'io' substitutes for 'tu'. It has been claimed that the point of view has changed. From the point of view of the addressee and the speaking voice together (as the speaking voice is hoping to establish a contact with the absent addressee), there has occurred a shift to the point of view of the speaking voice alone. However, the first-person pronoun 'io' is followed by the negative verb occurrence 'non so' (v.22) which underlines that for the speaking voice the possibility of knowledge does not exist, or if it did exist before, it was connected to the presence of the woman. But his woman does not remember, therefore he cannot know.

The next two temporal deictics 'va' and 'resta' have spatial dimensions implicit in their meaning: 'resta' implies the spatial demonstrative 'qui' and 'va' implies 'lì'. Both verbs are in the present tense thus referring to the *now* temporal dimension. If the spatio-temporal dimensions remain specific and identifiable with a *here-and-now* until the end of the poem, the definite *origo* references indicated by the person pronouns 'tu' and 'io' change into the indefiniteness of the interrogative pronoun 'chi' (v.22). The thread of memory with the addressee has been cut and the 'io' cannot identify himself without opposing himself to a 'tu'. The possibility of knowledge was connected to a past time when the 'io' and the 'tu' were re-joined in a Platonic totality: once one of the halves is lost, all there is left is uncertainty, doubt and, as indicated by the linguistic elements of the last line, indefiniteness: 'io non so chi va e chi resta' (v.22).

2.8 Conclusion

On analyzing some of Montale's poems I have stressed that his texts are organized around clear spatio-temporal dimensions which include *here-and-now* opposed to *there-and-then* dimensions separated by a metaphorical 'erto muro' which under specific circumstances allows passage from one dimension to the other. A long path has been followed to prove some degree of spatial and temporal dissolution within Montale's lyrics: the rigidity of the spatial dimensions, 'in un riposo / freddo le forme, opache, sono sparse' ('Sul muro grafito', vv.7-8, p.48), turns into fluidity when the 'ondata della vita' ('In limine', v.2, p.5) hits the sacred garden; the merciless flow of time comes to a halt and reveals, spatially, the Other-side in its salvation-damnation twofold nature; knowledge of the 'io' and 'tu' turns into mutual forgetfulness. I have tried to show how the dissolution of reality is linguistically indicated within the structure of the poetic contexts through the use of deixis. The system of deixis was used in order to create shifts of focus from one dimension to the other within the spatio-temporal dimensions of the text.

Elisabetta Graziosi has summarized Montale's poetic experience as the expression of 'disarmonia, solitudine, prigionia: questo il punto estremo della parabola [...] indicata dalle parole di Montale' (1972a, p.151). Each of the analyzed texts, has shown in degrees that disharmony, solitude and imprisonment are the constant answers left by Montale: a possible escape to a different concept of space and time, fails for the speaking voice but may be allowed to the addressee who is, from *Occasioni* onwards, the absentee by default. If the 'tu' is absent, the 'io' remains 'lo smarrito adolescente' ('Riviere', v.19, p.99) by default, 'l'esiliato' who is not allowed back 'nel paese incorrotto' ('Ho sostato talvolta nelle grotte', v.15, p.54),

and his possibility to access knowledge cannot take place. Linguistically, the loneliness of the speaking voice has been shown by the deictic shift from 'noi' to 'io' both in 'In limine' ('Cerca una maglia rotta nella rete / che *ci* stringe, [...] — ora la sete / *mi* sarà lieve, meno acre la ruggine', vv.15-18, p.5, my italics) and in 'La casa dei doganieri' ('Tu non ricordi la casa di questa / *mia* sera. Ed io non so chi va e chi resta', vv.21-22, p.161, my italics). The possibility to understand the meaning of reality, to penetrate the secrets of nature is not contemplated if the 'io' is separated from the 'tu', the 'great revelation' never comes. Knowledge is only possible in small illuminations, and in this sense, I underline a thematic closeness to Virginia Woolf:²⁶

What is the meaning of life? That was all — a simple question; one that tended to close in on one with years. The great revelation had never come. The great revelation perhaps never did come. Instead there were little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark. Here was one. (*To the Lighthouse*, pp.175-76)

Likewise, in Montale's universe temporary signals of 'invisibili spiragli' ('Botta e risposta I', v.20, p.276) are read as 'little daily miracles' of contingency: if the Montalian 'tu' is able to step beyond the 'erto muro', the speaking voice waits for the signal within the garden of life renouncing full knowledge, if full knowledge implies purification by fire ('alla scintilla / che si levò fui nuovo e incenerito', 'Luce d'inverno', vv.16-17, p.233) and self-sacrifice. Dissolution is accepted only partially, enough to derail momentarily from the blind tunnel of life and time and see the sign: the moment such a sign is noticed, is the moment to step back, to turn back and carry on 'zitto / tra gli uomini che non si voltano, col mio segreto' ('Forse un mattino andando', vv.7-8, p.40).

Linguistic dissolution of the text does take place up to a certain limit. Spatially, the *reliquiario-poem-garden* turns into a melting pot and reaches a point of fluidity whereby the 'tu' can leave ('tu balza fuori, fuggi', v.16, p.5), but soon turns back into a reliquary delimited by 'una muraglia che ha in cima cocci aguzzi di bottiglia' ('Meriggiare pallido e assorto', vv.16-17, p.28).

Expressions of time which describe the traditional unidirectional flow of time (indicated by non-deictic tenses) turn into moments when time stops: 'Oh l'orizzonte in fuga, dove s'accende / rara la luce della petroliera!' ('La casa dei doganieri', vv.17-18, p.161) identifies the moment in time when the sign, 'la luce della petroliera', could be read and the 'varco' could be found, instead time expressions return to a descriptive non-deictic present, 'ripullula il frangente / ancora sulla balza che scoscende' (vv.19-20). Temporal dissolution results in the annihilation of past and future into a present which is the only merciless reality which reveals or destroys all: events are pictured as momentarily coming into existence and disappearing quickly from it. Semantically, the use of 'minuto', 'attimo' or other similar expressions of time is indicative of temporal disintegration: the moment can be destructive ('ed ecco che in un attimo / invisibili fili a me si asserpano', 'Riviere', vv.10-11, p.99; 'derelitte le fronde / dei vivi che si smarriscono / nel prisma del minuto', 'Derelitte sul poggio', vv.11-13, p.156) or salvific ('quell'istante / è forse molto atteso che ti scampi / dal finire il tuo viaggio', 'Arsenio', vv.19-21, p.81; 'Perderne non vorrei neppure un attimo: è questa la mia parte, ogni altra è vana', 'Crisalide', vv.27-28, p.85). The moment (indicated deictically) is the sudden dilation of time when the miracle can take place: 'la temporalità che si rivela nella mutazione, assume così il carattere caleidoscopico dei singoli elementi che la

compongono, priva di unità coerente, si risolve nella unicità dei singoli istanti' (Graziosi 1972a, p.158).

'In limine', 'Meriggiare pallido e assorto' and, above all, 'I morti' have shown that, although spatial disintegration of the garden-prison wall can happen, it is only momentary and destined to return to cold forms and trap within its coil of dead memories the poetic voice. Dilation of the minute is the only hope left and, as shown by 'Fuscello teso dal muro' and 'La casa dei doganieri', it may lead to read the sign of a possible different order of things, even if only momentarily. Dilation of time is, however, destined to close again into ordinary flow of time which proceeds without mercy. Disharmony, solitude and imprisonment (spatially, temporally and thematically) remain the arrival points of Montale's poetry.

The moment-vision is the only connecting point between the dimensions of *here-and-there* and *now-and-then*, which has been identified with the zone of the 'erto muro', to which I have referred as the *limen*: this is the poetic and linguistic area in proximity of which spatio-temporal dissolution (both linguistically and thematically) takes place. A study of the *limen* will be the focus of the next chapter: I shall attempt to examine it metaphorically and linguistically by paying some attention to the behaviour of deixis in order to understand its function and further my search into the dissolution of the Montalian text.

Notes

¹ Montale was deeply influenced by the French philosophers Bergson, and especially Boutroux, from whom he derived the belief in the impossibility of separating immanence and transcendence. See Montale (1976, p.601-2) and Pipa (1976, pp.193-204).

² The female saviour image present within Montale's poetic system undergoes many transformations: from the Ovidian figure of Clizia it turns into a perpetuator of Christ's sacrifice (see Barile 1990, pp.51ff) and, finally, towards the end of *La bufera e altro*, into an 'angelo nero'. From *Satura* onwards there other transformations: after the death of Montale's wife (Mosca) the angel becomes a fly which, in its epiphanies, visits the speaking voice. Later the 'angelo nero' turns into a 'miniangelo spazzacamino' (a chimney-sweeper miniature angel). Finally, the presence of the visiting angel disappears altogether to leave the speaking voice in a direct contact with God, or a god (see Ó Ceallacháin 1998, pp.143-54).

³ Cary (1993, p.326) wrote about the negativity of *Ossi di seppia*: 'I believe that critics have made too much of Montale as a wastelander, a poet of desolation and despair. I do not mean that the mouse is an eagle, but if he knows that he is a mouse then this is something — perhaps he is a "lucky" mouse'. West (1989, p.226) adds to this: 'I emphasize the continuing tension between hope and despair, positivity and negativity throughout Montale's poetry'.

⁴ In the texts which I analyze from the point of view of deixis, I shall list the deictic items there present after the poem itself. However, although all deictics will be listed, not all of them will be necessarily involved in my discussion of the poem.

⁵ The theme of the *orto* is one of the *topoi* present in Montale's poetic production (see Giachery, 1985, p.24) and is the starting point of his research into reality and unreality: the 'garden' becomes a symbol of the closed place where the speaking voice is imprisoned. Later variants of the theme of the *orto* will be the 'closed room', the 'prison cell', and so forth. From *Ossi di seppia* through to *La bufera e altro* there are many instances where the image of the *orto* recurs: 'Meriggiare pallido e assorto / presso un rovente muro d'orto' ('Meriggiare pallido e assorto', vv.1-2, p.28); 'ad aprire la porta / stridula sulla ghiaia del giardino' ('Fine dell'infanzia', vv.88-89, p.65); 'viene a impetuose onde / la vita a questo estremo angolo d'orto' ('Crisalide', vv.12-13, p.85). 'e un cane lionato s'allunga nell'umido orto' ('Elegia di Pico Farnese', v.7, p.175); 'sul ciliegio del tuo giardino' ('Incantesimo', v.8, p.235); 'io non so se nell'orto / dove le ghiande piovono e oltre il muro / si sfioccano, aerine, le ghirlande' ('L'orto', vv.6-8, p.243).

⁶ Ramat (1972, p.494) has already hypothesized a possible identity between the orchard and the text itself. See also Giachery (1985, p.26).

⁷ Semino (1992, 1995) has analyzed some of the various possible relationships which a text can establish with its reader: from the situation where the reader is an

'eavesdropper' listening to other people's conversations, to that in which the reader is placed in the deictic centre of the text. In this interpretation of 'In limine' I would like to show that the reader can, in some instances, be not only placed in the deictic centre of the text, but become a necessary element in the functioning of the text.

⁸ Margaret Brose (1984, p.170) saw a very close resemblance between this text and its position within *Ossi di seppia* and the text written on the door of Dante's *Inferno*.

⁹ The issue of why the speaking voice is not able or cannot proceed beyond the wall has been explored in the following: West (1981), Brose (1984), Riccobono (1994).

¹⁰ See E. Montale, 'Intenzioni (Intervista immaginaria)', 1946, *Sulla poesia*, p.536.

¹¹ The private meaning of the Montalian 'orto' is more underlined in the 'Silvae' section of *La bufera e altro* in poems such as 'L'orto', 'L'ombra della magnolia' and 'Proda di Versilia'.

¹² Fabris (1984, p.12) has compared the wind which brings the reliquary back to fertility to the powers of the Holy Ghost impregnating the Virgin Mary. In this interpretation of the poetic text as a sterile womb which is fertilized by the intervention of the wind of inspiration, it is possible to perceive the presence of the *topos* of the *hortus conclusus*. By using the term *hortus conclusus* I intend to carry also the semantic significance of the biblical *locus amoenus*. For further reference on *hortus conclusus* in Montale's poetry see Brose (1984, p.170) and Giachery (1985, p.25).

¹³ Graziosi notes that the image of 'l'ondata della vita' is a metaphor which symbolizes temporality entering the garden of life. 'Fra le metafore naturalistiche indicanti tempo la più interessante forse, anche se non la più evidente nell'economia generale degli *Ossi*, è quella che associa il tempo all'acqua' (1972a, pp.156-57).

¹⁴ The metamorphoses of the Montalian garden have been studied by Emerico Giachery in 'Metamorfosi dell'orto' (1985, pp.9-47).

¹⁵ In 'Spento un fuoco se ne può accendere un altro' Montale describes how the sea had a fundamental importance in his formation as a man (and possibly as a poet): 'Io ho vissuto 31 anni in Liguria. Vicino al *mare*, perché, sebbene a Genova il *mare* si veda per lo più solo col cannocchiale, i tre-quattro mesi dell'estate noi li passavamo nelle Cinqueterre a Monterosso, dove il *mare* entrava quasi in casa. Io e i miei fratelli vivevamo praticamente sul *mare*, sul *mare* abbiamo vissuto una gran parte della nostra vita. Questa è stata una stagione molto formativa; però ha anche costituito un avvio all'*introversione*, ha portato ad un *imprigionamento* nel cosmo [...] questa è stata una stagione molto formativa, ripeto' (1966, pp.3-4). Montale constantly shapes his poetic word on the Ligurian landscape, recognizable in its basic

components: 'mare', 'terreno bruciato dal salino' ('Portami il girasole', v.2, p.32), 'rupi' and 'cielo'. Montale's poetry transforms the landscape from which it takes its inspiration into symbols of existence: 'Il "nullismo" montaliano approda sulle spiagge di una Liguria non oleografica, assunta a drammatico emblema di un Eden rovesciato dell'impossibile felicità, dove il paesaggio — pur colto con puntuale realismo — funge da enigmatica allegoria del "male di vivere"' (Marchese 1992, pp.336-37).

¹⁶ For reference see *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana*, X, pp.161-62; *Il dizionario della lingua italiana*, p.91.

¹⁷ This also implies that 'un rovente muro d'orto' (v.2) and 'una muraglia' (v.16) function as discourse deictics, i.e. they orientate the text towards the macro-text: the whole of the Montalian poetic production which can be seen as a macro-poem. The macro-text indicated by discourse deixis will be analyzed more closely in Chapter Five. Meanwhile discourse deictics will be listed along with other deictic categories below the poetic texts for the reader's attention and to help identify which schemata are created within Montale's poetry.

¹⁸ Fairclough (1992, pp.121-22) refers to the negation of a fact present and recognized within the same context as a negative intertext. I prefer to define it as a negative intra-textual reference.

¹⁹ Rebecca West (1981) has written a very interesting book on the status of marginality of Montale's poetry, to which I feel I am greatly indebted. West collocates Montale's poetic experience in an in-between area which can be viewed to symbolically mediate between the plenitude of expression (the total language) and the emptiness of silence. The position of the poetic persona on the edge of the garden is only one of the examples to which West refers in her work.

²⁰ The relationship between Montale and his 'care ombre' has been studied by Cambon (1983) and West (1989). In particular West has stressed the relationship between Montale, Dante and Vergil and their attachment to shadow-figures. See also Chapter Four, note 10, p.170. For further studies on the contact Montale-Dante see also Pipa (1968), Baranski (1985, pp.11-48), Mengaldo (1996, pp.163-262), O'Neill (1998, 27-42).

²¹ Despite the effort towards a dissolution of reality and the intrinsic negative connotations of the spatio-temporal cage where the Montalian *ego* must live, the theme of hope is central and recurrent within the system of Montale's poetry. See, for instance, 'Piccolo testamento', 'd'una fede che fu combattuta / d'una speranza che bruciò più lenta / di un duro ceppo nel focolare' (vv.10-12, p.267); 'La speranza di pure rivederti', 'La speranza di pure rivederti / m'abbandonava' (vv.1-2, p.138); 'L'anguilla', 'l'anima verde che cerca / vita là dove solo / morde l'arsura e la desolazione, / la scintilla che dice / tutto comincia quando tutto pare / incarbonirsi, bronco seppellito' (vv.20-25, p.254).

²² The comparison of the rough sea with the bubbling of a boiling liquid ('ribollio') reminds us of the 'crogiuolo' of 'In limine'.

²³ The theme of the attraction of the dead to the land of the living, namely the existential spatio-temporal cage, is a theme constantly present in Montale's poetry. The dead have, supposedly, managed to go beyond the 'sheer wall', they have found the 'broken mesh in the net which grips us'. However they seem to want come back; this attraction towards the claustrophobic garden is similar to the attraction of the moth towards the light in the room of 'Vecchi versi' (pp.111-12), or the father's soul in 'Voce giunta con le folaghe' (pp.250-51), or the insect's in 'Caro piccolo insetto' (p.281).

²⁴ If the definite article creates complicity between the speaking voice and the addressee, the definite reference is addresser orientated. However, there may be hypothesized a partial identity between reader and addressee, thus continuing the meta-textual contact between text and reader. I have used the term 'familiarity' with the same meaning as Grundy (1995, pp.29-30) uses the term 'common ground'.

²⁵ The metaphorical meanings of the image of the oil-tanker's intermittent light (which refers to memory's intermittent flashes) see Greco (1980, pp.27-28). Further references to intermittent lights can be found in 'Il balcone' ('la vita che dà barlumi', v.9, p.107), 'I pressepapers' ('ho lampi che s'accendono / e si spengono. È tutto il mio bagaglio', vv.8-9, p.566), 'Se al più si oppone il meno il risultato' ('"Anche il faro, lo vedi, è intermittente"', v.7, p.561).

²⁷ Another point of contact between Montale and Virginia Woolf has been suggested by Felix Siddell in his article 'Verticality in Montale' (1998, p.103).

Chapter Three: The question of liminality: further reflections on spatio-temporal dimensions in Montale's universe of poetry

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I shall analyze liminality from the point of view of the organization of the deictic system in order to further the insight into the spatio-temporal universe and its dissolution presented by Montale in his poetic texts. I shall single out some particular behaviour of deixis and use of other linguistic signs (i.e. the prefix 'ri-') from the short story 'Sul limite' (*Farfalla di Dinard*, 1960) which I shall later apply to two poetic texts ('Vasca' and 'Carnevale di Gerti') in order to point out liminal spaces or dimensions within Montale's poetic production.

3.2 Between *here* and *there*: liminality as a third spatio-temporal dimension

From the very first poem 'In limine' the spatio-temporal dimensions created within Montale's lyric text involve a space defined by *here-and-now* opposed to a space which is beyond a sheer wall: 'un rovello è di qua dall'erto muro' ('In limine', v.10, p.5). The speaking voice is spatially imprisoned by the enclosure of the 'muro d'orto' and temporally always challenged by the regressing of his memory and so are the other participants in the fictitious context created by the poetic discourse. Nevertheless, Montale clarifies that, unlike the others, he is a 'uomo che si volta' and who does ask himself about the ontological meaning of existence.¹

The pivot of Montale's poems can be identified with the search for salvation which is, in most of his lyrics, associated with the successful relationship between the

speaking voice and the addressee who can, to a certain extent, be identified with a feminine figure, with a past or possible lover with whom he can complete the philosophical journey which will free both of them. In 'Dora Markus', Dora indicates that the land to which she belongs is beyond the sea.² Dora's longing for her native land can be recognized as a feeling of disharmony with the surrounding spatio-temporal environment which unites the two lovers as soul-mates:

[...] Con un segno
della mano additavi all'altra sponda
invisibile la tua patria vera.
(*'Dora Markus'*, vv.4-6, p.125)

However, this relationship turns out to be impossible as the addressee is either absent or has lost her memory.³ Despite this, Montale faithfully pursues in his search for salvation:

d'una fede che fu combattuta,
d'una speranza che bruciò più lenta
di un duro ceppo nel focolare.
(*'Piccolo testamento'*, vv.10-12, p.267)

Throughout his production Montale puts emphasis on the same problem in different ways by changing tone and metaphors, but fundamentally pivoting around the same question: how to defeat the spatio-temporal-historical limitations of reality. The spatial antinomy of finite and infinite, here and there, finds its philosophical counterpart in another binary opposition: the poet's frequent distinction between Necessity and Miracle.⁴ The search for salvation coincides with the search for the 'miracle' or 'the un-necessary' or the 'exceptional', and, consequently, with avoiding 'necessity' which finds a qualitative ontological correspondent in the 'invariable'

condition of life and death. The distances between such conflicting opposites as Necessity and Miracle become much shorter if salvation is expected to be found not in a place beyond reality, which can be seen as corresponding with emptiness, or death, but in a dimension which lies between here and beyond the 'sheer wall': a dimension which I have referred to as *limen* and which corresponds to poetry itself.⁵ Montale adopts poetry as a means of expression in order to carry out his search into the meaning of life and reality: the result of this is that his poetic system can be viewed as a philosophy where *poesis* equals *gnosis* (Brose 1984, p.152).⁶ However his poetry-philosophy does not carry any certainty or any definite answers to the question of existence:

it should be stressed, however, that Montale's *gnosis* contains no intimations of any knowledge of origins or ends. It is a knowledge only of a dessicated present. Nor is there any supportive ritualization of the instructive process: Montale's liminality is terrifyingly random, accidental, aleatory. The ground beyond or below a distracted or disturbed Divinity, an oxymoric phrase that is typical of the clouding of those meager epiphanies that the poem proffers us. In most cases, the epiphany is as puzzling as the obscurity it promises to clarify. The signs are not read, the moment fades. (Brose 1984, p.160)

Montale's poetry makes no pretence to offer a solution to the question that it raises: 'Non chiederci la parola che squadri da ogni lato / l'animo nostro informe' and 'Non domandarci la formula che mondi possa aprirti' ('Non chiederci la parola', vv.1-2 and 9, p.27). Rather, it presents itself as a possible means of interpretation of reality, an indication of a possible way to the 'varco' through the phase of liminality. Reading reality is, however, not always possible and the search for the miracle seems to be less promising than the Montalian poetic voice had wished.

In Chapter Two I have proposed a study of texts which opposed a *here*-dimension to a *there*-dimension and highlighted a passage from one to the other. However, the zone-phase through which it is necessary to pass in order to go from one to the other was only given attention in the analysis of 'In limine'. In the present chapter I shall give more emphasis to the zone of liminality by proposing the analyses of other texts. The theme of the *limen* is dealt with by Montale both in poetry and his prose: in 'In limine', in 'Sul limite'. The short story 'Sul limite' refers to the journey to a zone between life and the afterlife and depicts it roughly as a kind of Purgatory zone where the protagonist must be purged before he is allowed to proceed beyond. The protagonist of 'Sul limite', after an apparently 'stupido incidente', encounters people and animals whom he knew many years before and whom he supposes to be already dead. Through these encounters he realizes that he is dead too and that 'il solito stupido incidente' was in fact a fatal one for himself. Fictionally, the speaking voice has managed to go beyond the 'erto muro' and can therefore describe the new dimension. However, the protagonist is soon to realize that the afterlife is subdivided into four zones, the first of which, i.e. a hypothetical town called 'Limite', he is travelling to. This short story offers a close view of what is Montale's fictional idea of the dimensions beyond the 'erto muro' and it is worth pursuing a closer analysis of the text centring the attention on the images of directions and change of direction.

3.3 The Purgatory of 'Sul limite': a journey backwards in order to proceed⁷

The fictional journey into liminality is 'il viaggio' ('Sul limite', p.222) to which the narrator is referring retrospectively in the opening sentence of the short story. The

fact that the journey is presented to the reader as already experienced is clarified by the definite article 'il' which functions as a referential deictic with a cataphoric value. This journey, as the narrator explains, was preceded by a car accident ('il solito stupido incidente', p.222) which seems to be irrelevant to the narrator while it is happening, but is pivotal to the progression of the whole narration. As a matter of fact, it is after the accident that the first changes in the spatio-temporal dimension can be noticed: 'Dopo un tempuscolo che parve eterno seguì un cozzo...' (p.222). The word 'tempuscolo' in Italian can be most appropriately translated as 'an insignificant lapse of time', however the apparently insignificant period of time is perceived as 'eternal'. After this sentence the temporal dimension seems to lose its conventional boundaries. Furthermore, after the same sentence the spatial dimension becomes anonymous as the areas of the city where the narrator was travelling in the taxi are no longer named. Previously the streets and the squares were named and therefore recognizable by the reader familiar with Milan: 'Avevo lasciato una casa di amici in via della Carra' (p.222), 'speravo di raggiungere piazza Beccaria' (p.222), 'La macchina attraversava il Prato' (p.222). After the accident scene no further names are mentioned, only 'la Porta' (but it is not specified to the reader which gate), and later 'Limite' (p.225).

After the accident the narrator-protagonist decides to carry on his journey to 'piazza Beccaria' by tramway and when the tram arrives at the terminus 'una tettoia di legno' (p.223) he realizes that the direction in which he has travelled is exactly the opposite of where he was hoping to go:

ebbi il tempo di spolverarmi alla meglio la giacca, di toccarmi per sentire s'ero vivo e di saltare su un tranvai che passava a poca distanza. Il tranvai era

semivuoto, tutti scesero alla Porta, e anche il bigliettaio, per fumare; tuttavia il veicolo ripartì abbastanza veloce, senza di lui, e dopo pochi minuti mi accorsi ch'ero arrivato alla periferia della città, in senso perfettamente contrario alla destinazione che speravo di toccare. Giunti presso una tettoia di legno, — Qui finisce la corsa — mi disse il conduttore invitandomi a scendere. ('Sul limite', p.223)

It is at this point in the development of the text that further temporal and spatial irregularities start to occur: 'Era primavera ma faceva già caldo. Dovevano essere le sei del pomeriggio, a giudicare dalla luce. Strano, avrei supposto che fosse molto più tardi. Mi tastai per cercar l'orologio quando...' (p.223). The reader is not informed of what time it was when the protagonist caught the taxi before the car accident, however both the protagonist and the reader get the impression that time has stopped or, at least, is no longer relevant to the story. The time is not checked by the protagonist who does not seem to worry about it any longer in the text. The concept of time has been annihilated in a way, as the concept of space has become anonymous: 'La campagna intorno era incolore e da lontano appariva un gruppo di case bianchissime' (p.226), 'Gli alberi delle campagne erano bassi e uniformi e il sole pareva fermo sull'orizzonte' (p.227).

The protagonist is met by three characters belonging to his past, Nicola, Pinocchietto and Galiffa, who shall escort him to Limite in order for him to see the film of his life and to meet another person of his past, Giovanna. It is at this point that the speaking voice starts to realize that he is dead, or alive as, soon, Nicola corrects him:

— Giovanna — confermò Nicola avviando il somarello fra alcune ricche piantagioni che parevano di ricino. — È anche lei a Limite, e trova modo di occuparsi persino dello Zoo.

— Morta? — arrischiavi a occhi bassi traballando sul sedile angusto. E aspiravi un mozzicone di sigaretta che mi parve stranamente insapore.

— E... sta bene?

— Viva — ammonì seccamente; — o meglio, anche per lei il guanto s'è rovesciato; come per me, come per te. Di' pur morta se credi. ('Sul limite', p.226)

Life is the other face of death and, more precisely, what is conventionally called 'life' constitutes death. The protagonists of this short story have acquired life now that they are in the 'Limite' area. Before, when they were in the 'Antelimites', they were dead:

— T'ha fatto un certo effetto, eh? — ghignò Nicola con un'allegria che pareva sforzata.

— Lo so, la prima volta si è ancora attaccati alle storie di prima. È come accadeva a me quand'ero tra i vivi, che dico?, tra i morti dell'Antelimites da cui tu giungi ora; sognavo e al risveglio ricordavo ancora il sogno, poi anche quella memoria si perdeva. ('Sul limite', p.226)

However, as the Antelimites, i.e. life, is only an antechamber to the real life, i.e. life after death, so Limite is the antechamber to the next zones where the dematerialization process begins, where the terrestrial memory is progressively put to sleep and a new memory takes its place. In this way the Antelimites coincides with a stage of potential life, the embryonic stage of a man's life. On the other hand, Zones II and III correspond to the stage of full activity of one's personality. It is in Zone II that the 'istituto delle entelechie superiori' (p.227) is fictionally placed by the author:

e Giovanna è preziosa come interprete. Ha sempre avuto una *bosse* spiccatissima per le lingue, e ti assicuro che qui ce n'è gran bisogno. Certo a Zona II ci sarà molto da fare per lei, all'istituto delle entelechie superiori dove comincia il processo di smaterializzazione. ('Sul limite', p.227)

Entelechy is an Aristotelian word and refers to the reality when it has reached its fullest degree of development.⁸ This means that people at Limite are still waiting to reach the full development of their existence.⁹ Limite represents a zone of liminality where each of its characters (including animals) are getting ready for dematerialization into the dimensions beyond the 'erto muro', into real existence in its fullest form or essence. The spatio-temporal dimensions which characterize conventional existence have been annihilated once the Antelimito has been left. Limite is the next stage after the dissolution of reality and Zone I, II and III coincide with a further dissolution of memories, forms into superior entelechies.

From the beginning of the text the whole story deals with a journey, first by taxi, then by tramway and, finally, by carriage. However, the journey by tramway takes the protagonist in the opposite direction from where he was heading. It could therefore be claimed that from the ride on the tram onwards the protagonist has been on an anti-journey. When it is made clear that life is death and death is life, the terms referring to the journey can be re-dimensioned. After the car accident the protagonist is on his journey, and it was before the accident that he was travelling in the wrong direction. The journey to Limite, in the company of Nicola, Galiffa and Pinocchietto, is taking the protagonist back to face his past in order to come to terms with it and be able to proceed further to Zones I, II and III. Facing his past is a necessary step in order to be able to shed the earthly memory and then reach the full degree of development of his real essence beyond physical death.

Linguistic signs of the change of direction can be traced through the text after the car accident occurs. A series of verbs starting with the prefix 'ri-' which can indicate either an action repeated from the beginning, or an action opposed to another action

as for instance 'to return' is the contrary of 'to go'. The use of the verbal prefix 'ri-' in the economy of this text can signify either or both at the same time according to the context. When the tram leaves the protagonist at the terminus, the vehicle 'ripartì vuoto' obviously in the opposite direction. Later, when the two old friends meet, Nicola asks the protagonist: 'Non mi riconosci? (p.224). The verb 'riconoscere' can be separated into 'ri-conoscere' with two meanings at the same time: 'remember' but also 'know again'. Both meanings are embedded in the use of the verb 'riconoscere'. As a matter of fact, the main character of the short story is forced to remember his past, but at the same time to face it again and deal with it in order for him to come to terms with his past life.

More verbs and vocabulary are used which can be recognized as containing the prefix 'ri': 'L'asinello e il cagnolino mi leccavano le mani dando vivaci segni di *riconoscimento*' (pp.224-25); 'quando ho sentito il tuo nome mi son fatto girare il film della tua vita. L'avevo già *ripassato* altre volte, perché era inciso e completo fino ad oggi' (p.225); 'Fufi e Gastoncino, Passepoil e Bubù, Buck e la Valentina... Non temere, potrai *rivederli* tutti' (p.225); 'Poi *riapersi* gli occhi e vidi che il calessino...' (p.226); 'Giovanna ti farà vedere la "registrazione" di quella che hai chiamato la tua vita, stenterai a *riconoscerla*' (pp.226-27); 'Non si potrebbe *rimandare* questa faccenda? questo incontro, dico?' (p.228); 'Non posso *ricominciare*, Nicola, non posso, portami da mia madre... se c'è' (p.229) and, finally, 'Era troppo comodo dimenticare. *Riprendi* a vivere come noi... giunti prima di te' (p.229). The high number of these words and verbs preceded by 'ri-' can be seen to function as spatial deictics on some occasions, and temporal deictics on others (see Fillmore 1982, 1983). Their common function is that of 'deviating' the conventional

direction of the journey 'life-dissolution into death' into 'physical death-dissolution into life' where physical death is seen as the turning point which leads to real existence. Deictic elements which are opposed or refer to opposition of directions, both in time and space, seem to be present in proximity or within the dimension of liminality. At the very beginning of Montale's production, in 'In limine', the speaking voice invites the addressee to take part in the dynamics of the 'pomario-reliquiario' through a series of imperatives: '*Godi se il vento ch'entra nel pomario/ vi rimena l'ondata della vita*' (vv.1-2, p.5); '*vedi che si trasforma questo lembo / di terra solitario in un crogiuolo*' (vv.8-9, p.5). However, at the end of the poem the same poetic persona asks the addressee-reader to get out of the orchard, to escape, but in a different direction: '*Cerca una maglia rotta nella rete / che ci stringe, tu balza fuori, fuggi!*' (vv.15-16, p.5). Both the journey through 'Limite' and the poem 'In limine' seem to have the same function: to oblige the traveller to go through their 'morto / viluppo di memorie' ('In limine', vv.3-4, p.5) in order for them to become alive and transform the 'reliquiario' into a 'crogiuolo', a space of poetic creation, but also of full development of their real essence. In the same way, the use of the prefix 'ri-' in the language of 'Sul limite' urges the protagonist to revisit his past, his 'morto / viluppo di memorie', in order to proceed to Limite and beyond, in search of the truthful plenitude of his existence.

3.4 'Vasca'

Passò sul tremulo vetro
 un riso di belladonna fiorita,
 di tra le rame urgevano le nuvole,
 dal fondo ne riassommava

la vista fioccosa e sbiadita. 5
 Alcuno di noi tirò un ciottolo
 che ruppe la tesa lucente:
 le molli parvenze s'infransero.

Ma ecco, c'è altro che striscia 10
 a fior della spera rifatta liscia:
 di erompere non ha virtù,
 vuol vivere e non sa come;
 se lo guardi si stacca, torna in giù:
 è nato e morto, e non ha avuto un nome.

Spatial deictics:

'ecco' (v.9)
 'erompere' (v.11)
 'torna' (v.13)
 'in giù' (v.13)

Origo deictics:

'noi' (v.6)

Syntactic deictics:

None

Subjectivity deictics:

None

Temporal deictics:

'Passò' (v.1)
 'tirò' (v.6)
 'ruppe' (v.7)
 'striscia' (v.9)
 '[non] ha' (v.11)
 'vuol' (v.12)
 '[non] sa' (v.12)
 'si stacca' (v.13)
 'torna' (v.13)
 'è nato' (v.14)
 '[è] morto' (v.14)
 '[non] ha avuto' (v.14)

Referential deictics:

'sul' (v.1)
 'le rame' (v.3)
 'le nuvole' (v.3)
 'dal' (v.4)
 'le molli...' (v.8)
 'altro' (v.9)
 'della' (v.10)

Discourse deictics:

None

The definite article 'il' (part of the articulated preposition 'sul') functions as a referential deictic and refers to the reflecting surface of the pool, 'sul tremulo vetro' (v.1). The surface of the pool by metonymy represents the whole pool. At the same time the surface reflects the surroundings of the pool and that is all that one can perceive of the pool itself: what is under the water remains unknown. Soon another referential deictic is met: another definite article embedded in the articulated preposition 'dal', which refers to 'fondo': 'dal fondo ne riassommava / la vista fioccosa e sbiadita' (vv.4-5). The bottom of the pool, however, is reflecting the surroundings of the pool too. This means that the volume of space between the

surface and the bottom of the pool has been deleted and the whole pool is described simply as a reflecting surface. The description of reality and its events is represented as a reflection on the pool's surface: i.e. it is represented as a two dimensional reality, a mere projection on a screen.¹⁰ The pool's surface becomes, therefore, a metaphor of existence itself, a projection on a screen, the screen of the speaking voice's memory, which is suddenly shattered by a stone: 'alcuno di noi tirò un ciottolo / che ruppe la tesa lucente' (vv.6-7).¹¹

The various verbs in the past historic tense, which is used throughout the first stanza, have a temporal deictic function and represent the only dynamic presence in the scene (except for the presence of the poetic voice referred to by 'noi') in a flat, two-dimensional existential reality. The semantic meanings of the verbs in the past historic tense ('Passò', v.1; 'tirò', v.6; 'ruppe', v.7; 's'infransero', v.8), nevertheless, indicate the destruction of the two-dimensional reflection of reality which was but a false image of existence. At the same time, as the false screen of existence disappears, a new dimension becomes apparent, the depth of the pool, what lies beneath its surface. The stone thrown into the water has shattered the glass-like surface of the pool and created a 'maglia rotta' into a reality beyond the spatio-temporal 'rete / che ci stringe' ('In limine', vv.15-16, p.5). The crystallized dimension created by the use of the past historic in the previous lines has been shattered together with the two-dimensional spatial co-ordinates and a present, more dynamic, temporal dimension has taken over.

The second stanza of this poem presents spatio-temporal dimensions which are totally different from those of the first. The adverb 'ecco' (v.9) has a strong deictic function in indicating spatial dimension, or attracting attention towards some new

element present within the context of situation. As a matter of fact, the attention of the reader is attracted towards some new presence within the context of the poem. However, the new presence is not named or defined, but is simply referred to by the pronoun 'altro' (v.9) which not only keeps it anonymous, but connotes it as something other than what was seen before on the pool's surface: i.e. something different from the apparent reflection of reality.¹² The surface of the pool has now become calm again, and attention is drawn to it again by the referential deictic 'della' which refers to 'spera' (v.10). But 'altro' is crawling just under the surface. All the actions and descriptions are now in the present tense: 'c'è' (v.9), 'striscia' (v.9), 'non ha virtù' (v.11), 'vuol vivere' (v.12), 'non sa come' (v.12), 'si stacca' (v.13), 'torna in giù' (v.13); this allows us to perceive the events described in the poem in their evolving. In this way, in the second stanza both space and time are given a depth, a further dimension which was not identified in the first stanza. To the linear dimension of movement, which was described by the past historic 'passò' (v.1) and by 'striscia' (v.9), which is obviously the only kind of movement possible along or across a surface, a vertical movement (i.e. across volumes rather than just surfaces) has now been added. The two verbs which describe the vertical movement are 'erompere' (v.11) and the verb 'tornare' (v.13) followed by the spatial adverb 'in giù' (v.13).¹³ At the same time, the observational mode, marked by the use of the past historic, which characterized the first stanza, has changed into a participation mode: whilst in the first stanza the poetic persona was merely observing life on a glass-like screen, in the second stanza the switch to present tense marks not a physical participation in the unknown entity's actions, but an emotional one, a feeling of empathy towards it. The switch from past historic to present tense can be

seen to function as a mark of empathetic deixis. The entity described as something else is looking for a 'maglia rotta' in the surface of the pool in order to break out of it and come into existence. However, not having found a 'varco' out of its existential cage, it sinks back downwards.

It has been seen that in the second stanza of this poem the flat, two-dimensional organization of time, space and movement have been transformed into more complex dimensions: the space has assumed three-dimensional co-ordinates, time has become more dynamic and is viewed in its unfolding, movement which was linear has become non-linear. After the shattering of the glass-like surface and of the superficial appearance of reality, the identifiable speaking voice has for a moment seen beyond and found a way to break a mesh in the spatio-temporal net: i.e. has managed to see beyond the surface of reality. What he has seen is the attempt of an unnamed entity to break out of its existential dimensions. This poem can be considered to be constructed on the basis of a *mise-en-abîme* as in the first stanza the speaking voice manages to see through the superficial appearance of reality, and in the second stanza another entity is trying to break through its reality: this gives rise to a mirror-imaging game between the two stanzas, as if the reflecting pool's surface was actually placed between them. However, the unnamed entity has not managed to break through, and is therefore destined to disappear back to the bottom of the pool-poem. After the failure and the disappearance of the unnamed entity the past tense is resumed in the narration of the events: 'è nato e morto e non ha avuto un nome'. Time becomes crystallized again, which means that it loses the dynamism which it had acquired in the previous lines.¹⁴ At this point the two-dimensional co-ordinates are resumed and the momentary vision beyond the surface of existence has vanished. The potentiality

ora chiedi il paese dove gli onagri 20
 mordano quadri di zucchero alle tue mani
 e i tozzi alberi spuntino germogli
 miracolosi al becco dei pavoni.

(Oh il tuo Carnevale sarà più triste
 stanotte anche del mio, chiusa fra i doni 25
 tu per gli assenti: carri dalle tinte
 di rosolio, fantocci ed archibugi,
 palle di gomma, arnesi da cucina
 lillipuziani: l'urna li segnalava
 a ognuno dei lontani amici l'ora 30
 che il Gennaio si schiuse e nel silenzio
 si compì il sortilegio. È Carnevale
 o il Dicembre s'indugia ancora? Penso
 che se tu muovi la lancetta al piccolo
 orologio che rechi al polso, tutto 35
 arretrerà dentro un disfatto prisma
 babelico di forme e di colori...).

E il Natale verrà e il giorno dell'Anno
 che sfolla le caserme e ti riporta
 gli amici spersi, e questo Carnevale 40
 pur esso tornerà che ora ci sfugge
 tra i muri che si fendono già. Chiedi
 tu di fermare il tempo sul paese
 che attorno si dilata? Le grandi ali
 screziate ti sfiorano, le logge 45
 sospingono all'aperto esili bambole
 bionde, vive, le pale dei mulini
 rotano fisse sulle pozze garrule.
 Chiedi di trattenere le campane
 d'argento sopra il borgo e il suono rauco 50
 delle colombe? Chiedi tu i mattini
 trepidi delle tue prode lontane?

Come tutto si fa strano e difficile,
 come tutto è impossibile, tu dici.
 La tua vita è quaggiù dove rimbombano 55
 le ruote dei carriaggi senza posa
 e nulla torna se non forse in questi
 disguidi del possibile. Ritorna
 là fra i morti balocchi ove è negato
 pur morire; e col tempo che ti batte 60
 al polso e all'esistenza ti ridona,
 tra le mura pesanti che non s'aprono
 al gorgo degli umani affaticato,

torna alla via dove con te intristisco,
quella che additò un piombo raggelato
alle mie, alle tue sere:
torna alle primavere che non fioriscono.

65

Spatial deictics:

'alzano' (v.5)
'giù' (v.8)
'lontane' (v.52)
'quaggiù' (v.55)
'là' (v.59)

Origo deictics:

'ti nevica/ sui capelli
[e le mani' (vv.3-4)
'il tuo viaggio' (v.7)
'ti conduce' (v.9)
'la tua grazia' (v.12)
'hai ritrovato' (v.12)
'vuoi' (v.16)
'ti' (v.19)
'chiedi' (v.20)
'tue mani' (v.21)
'il tuo Carnevale' (v.24)
'del mio' (v.25)
'tu' (v.26)
'muovi' (v.34)
'rechi' (v.35)
'ti' (v.39)
'ci' (v.41)
'Chiedi / tu' (vv.42-43)
'ti' (v.45)
'Chiedi' (v.49)
'Chiedi tu' (v.51)
'delle tue prode' (v.52)
'tu dici' (v.54)
'La tua vita' (v.55)
'Ritorna' (v.58)
'ti batte / al polso' (vv.60-61)
'ti ridona' (v.61)
'torna' (v.64)
'con te' (v.64)
'alle mie' (v.66)

Temporal deictics:

'hai ritrovato' (v.12)
'tentò' (v.13)
'finì' (v.15)
'ora' (v.16)
'vuoi sostare' (v.16)
'fa spogli' (v.17)
'deriva' (v.18)
'compongono' (v.19)
'chiedi' (v.20)
'si schiuse' (v.31)
'si compì' (v.32)
'È Carnevale' (v.32)
's'indugia' (v.33)
'muovi' (v.34)
'rechi' (v.35)
'ora' (v.41)
'sfugge' (v.41)
'si fendono' (v.42)
'chiedi / tu' (vv.42-43)
'si dilata' (v.44)
'sfiorano' (v.45)
'tu dici' (v.54)
'rimbombano' (v.55)
'torna' (v.57)
'(non) s'aprono' (v.62)
'intristisco' (v.64)
'additò' (v.65)
'(non) fioriscono' (v.67)

Syntactic deictics:

'Ritorna' (v.58)
'torna' (v.64)
'torna' (v.67)

Referential deictics:

'la ruota' (v.1)
'nel groviglio' (v.1)
'il cavallo' (v.2)
'la calca' (v.3)
'i bimbi' (v.5)
'le flebili...' (v.6)
'i lievi...' (v.7)
'dal ponte' (v.8)
'sul fiume' (v.8)
'la strada' (v.9)
'la strada' (v.13)
'il piombo' (v.14)
'l'anno' (v.15)
'i suoni' (v.17)
'i [...] fumi' (vv.18-19)
'il domani' (v.19)
'il paese' (v.20)
'gli onagri' (v.20)
'i tozzi alberi' (v.22)
'al becco' (v.23)
'i doni' (v.25)
'gli assenti' (v.26)
'l'urna' (v.29)
'dei lontani amici' (v.30)
'l'ora' (v.30)
'il sortilegio' (v.32)
'la lancetta' (v.34)
'al piccolo...' (v.34)
'il Natale' (v.38)
'il giorno' (v.38)
'gli amici spersi' (v.40)
'questo Carnevale' (v.40)
'i muri' (v.42)
'il tempo' (v.43)
'sul paese' (v.43)
'le grandi ali' (v.44)
'le logge' (v.45)
'le pale' (v.47)

Origo deictics:

'alle tue' (v.66)

'torna' (v.67)

Discourse deictics:

'i muri' (v.42)

'le mura' (v.62)

'sere' (v.66)

Subjectivity deictics:

None

Referential deictics:

'sulle pozze' (v.48)

'le campane' (v.49)

'il borgo' (v.50)

'il suono rauco' (v.50)

'i mattini' (v.51)

'le ruote' (v.56)

'questi' (v.57)

'i morti balocchi' (v.59)

'col tempo' (v.60)

'all'esistenza' (v.61)

'le mura pesanti' (v.62)

'al gorgo' (v.63)

'alla via' (v.64)

'quella' (v.65)

'alle [...] sere' (v.66)

'alle primavere' (v.67)

Opposition of movements and breach of the conventional spatio-temporal laws of physics are elements which can be observed also in 'Carnevale di Gerti'. The very first image which the reader encounters in reading this poem is that of 'la ruota' which 's'impiglia nel groviglio / delle stelle filanti' (vv.1-2). It is not referred to as a wheel, but as *the* wheel: the use of the definite article functions as a referential deictic and the wheel is almost automatically compared to another wheel, that of time. The image, therefore, implies a sudden stop of the continuous and inexorable ongoing of time. The stopping of the wheel of time causes a series of events ('ed il cavallo / s'impenna tra la calca' (vv.2-3); 'se ti nevica / sui capelli e le mani un lungo brivido / d'iridi trascorrenti' (vv.3-5); 'o alzano i bimbi / le flebili ocarine che salutano / il tuo viaggio' (vv.5-7); 'se si sfolla la strada e ti conduce / in un mondo soffiato entro una tremula / bolla d'aria' (vv.9-11) which are suggested to be signs 'd'una vita strozzata per te [Gerti] sorta' ('Arsenio', vv.57-59, p.81). Although some of these events cannot be considered out of the ordinary, still they are perceived as

happening within an extraordinary timeless dimension which allows Gerti to reach her 'mondo soffiato entro una tremula / bolla d'aria' (vv.10-11).

All the images are presented as definite ones, they are introduced by definite articles and this helps the fictional context gain precision and to be thought a familiar scene (a street during the celebration of Carnival) both to the poetic voice and the addressee. The verb in the perfect tense 'hai ritrovato' (v.12) would not normally function as a time deictic, as this action is still part of the apodosis, therefore the temporal situation is still comprised in the hypothetical period. Nevertheless, it can be noted that between protases and apodosis the poet has decided to use a dash, rather than a comma. A dash is a punctuation mark which signifies a longer and more significant pause between the structures which it separates and unites at the same time. Although the first stanza of this poem can be seen as a very long hypothetical period, and therefore referring to a hypothetical situation only, I would claim that because of the presence of that dash something has occurred between the protases and the apodosis: it is possible to imagine that one of the hypothetical situations described by the protases has occurred and that 'la strada che tentò un istante / il piombo fuso a mezzanotte' (vv.13-14) has been found again. The value of the conjunctions introducing the protases swings between the temporal meaning of 'when' and the hypothetical meaning of 'if'. If so, the verb 'hai ritrovato' in the apodosis of the hypothetical period can be viewed also as a temporal deictic. The double value of the conjunctions 'if' creates a blurring between real and hypothetical temporal dimensions. Elisabetta Graziosi notes that:

i due moduli (real time and hypothetical time) a volte si alternano ad indicare sia circostanza concomitante sia circostanza eventuale, creando così

l'immagine di un tempo insieme reale e ipotetico, il cui significato si orienta addirittura verso l'invocazione ottativa. (1972b, p.522)

This invocation to a merger between reality and dream, gives birth to a series of experiments: that of 'il piombo fuso' (v.14) and that of the watch 'se tu muovi la lancetta al piccolo / orologio che rechi al polso, tutto / arretrerà dentro un disfatto prisma / babelico di forme e di colori...' (vv.34-37) which are clarified later in the text.

The temporal co-ordinate of 'Carnevale di Gerti' is set in the present and indicated by a past tense, 'hai ritrovato' (v.12), referring to a present situation. The present dimension is, however, immediately reconnected to a past situation, that of the end of the year 'quando / finì l'anno tranquillo senza spari' (vv.14-15), New Year's Eve 1927 when, as Montale himself explains, he and some friends, amongst whom Gerti, had tried the molten lead experiment.¹⁶

The perfect tense 'hai ritrovato' (v.12) and the past historic 'tentò' (v.13) and 'finì' (v.15) set a temporal co-ordinate of the fictional situation of the text, at the same time these tenses function as vehicles for a different temporal situation, that of the fictional deviation of the context into Gerti's private world. Within the structure of this text there are two deviations from reality: from the real occasions which gave inspiration for this text (New Year's Eve 1927 and a 'passeggiata in vettura' in Florence during Carnival in 1928)¹⁷ to a fictional context of situation (the text itself), and further into Gerti's private world set within 'una tremula / bolla d'aria e di luce' (vv.10-11). The temporal deictics are then anchoring the text to a temporal co-ordinate, but, at the same time, dislocating it onto another mental, personal dimension, that of Gerti's internal world or dream dimension. The passage into

Gerti's private spatio-temporal co-ordinates is clarified immediately by the spatial adverb 'dove' (v.16), by the temporal adverb 'ora' (v.16 and v.20) and by the use of the present tenses 'vuoi sostare' (v.16), 'fa spogli' (v.17), 'ne deriva' (v.18), 'ti compongono' (v.19), 'chiedi' (v.20). If the second stanza of this poem can be viewed as coinciding with Gerti's internal world defined by spatio-temporal co-ordinates of its own, then it is justifiable that the reader might search for the passage into this world in the first stanza. Such a passage occurs indeed in the very first line of the first stanza as the image of the wheel which stops recalls other series of images which identify liminality in other poems: 'La casa dei doganieri' and 'Fuscello teso dal muro'.¹⁸

As from the third stanza the poetic voice puts himself on the same level as the addressee: together with the second person pronoun 'tu' (v.26) and with the second person possessive adjective 'tuo' (v.24) there is a first person possessive adjective 'del mio' (v.25). The poetic persona and the addressee are united in a twinship of destinies, except that the addressee's destiny is even sadder than the poetic voice's: 'Oh il tuo Carnevale sarà più triste / stanotte anche del mio' (vv.24-25). The temporal adverb 'stanotte' (v.25) sets the temporal co-ordinate to a conventional time measurement which refers to a different time co-ordinate from that set by the adverb 'ora' (v.16) in the previous stanza. The whole of the third stanza is written within brackets: this may be a sufficient sign to show that it refers to a different perception of the spatio-temporal context of situation from the previous stanza. In the second stanza the addressee had entered an individual dimension of existence, separated from reality by a filter which 'fa spogli i suoni / e ne deriva i sorridenti ed acri / fumi che ti compongono il domani' (vv.17-19) and the reader had followed the

addressee into the same world. In the third stanza the poetic voice's perspective, linked with conventional spatio-temporal co-ordinates, is finally being disclosed together with the explicit use of first person *origo* deictics. The third stanza can therefore be seen as a comment on Gerti's mental journey into her individual time where conventions do not matter any longer, into a possible derailed reality. However the poetic voice's comment on such a journey assumes a note of pain and sympathy towards Gerti, as reality (i.e. tonight's Carnival) will be sad for both of them, but even sadder for Gerti as in her dream world, which is destined to burst like a 'tremula / bolla d'aria' (vv.10-11), the presents she has prepared are for 'gli assenti' (v.26), those who cannot be with her, but whom she hopes to find in her private regression in time.

The confusion of time which is made explicit in the blurring between past and present is created by the use of two present tenses: 'È Carnevale / o il Dicembre s'indugia ancora?' (vv.32-33).¹⁹ The first present tense refers to the content time which is identical to the coding time (in the sense that the context is fictionally encoded the day of Carnival); the second present refers to a content time which precedes the coding time, i.e. New Year's Eve, the night when the molten lead was interpreted, 'l'ora / che il Gennaio si schiuse e nel silenzio / si compì il sortilegio' (vv.30-32). The gap between the two content times is clarified by the use of the two past historic tenses in connection with New Years day 'si schiuse' and 'si compì'. The blurring between past and present, or the objective time in the fictional context and Gerti's private time is underlined by the use of the present tense in connection with both. Once more, after the image of the wheel in the first stanza, a new image of circular movement, the instrument of measurement of time, is presented as an

instrument of derailment of time: 'se tu muovi la lancetta al piccolo / orologio che tu rechi la polso, tutto / arretrerà' (vv.34-36).

In lines 33-34 the poetic voice seems to give in to the journey into a common (to both poetic voice and addressee) personal time, the time when both of them, fictionally, tried the molten lead experiment. The image of the watch in lines 34-36 can thus be seen as an instrument of deviation of temporal possibility for both poetic voice and addressee. The spell ('il sortilegio', v.32) has been cast on both participants in the context of situation, but only for a moment: in the fourth stanza there is a sudden change from the *origo* deictic 'ti' (v.39) to 'ci' (v.41). Later, in line 42, the second person singular deictics are resumed. The *origo* deictic 'ci' in line 39 is, so far, the only linguistic proof that the speaking voice has lost itself within the timeless flow of past, present and future. In a way, the poetic voice has entered liminality (Gerti's dream world) for a very brief time, whilst the addressee had entered it right at the beginning of the poem, exactly when the wheel got entangled in the streamers.

As from line 42 the addressee is again alone in her concept of time and space: the images are now focusing on the crystallization of the time and space which are taking shape around Gerti. This is reflected by the use of the present tenses 'chiedi' (v.42), 'si dilata' (v.44), 'ti sfiorano' (v.45), 'sospingono' (v.46) and 'rotano' (v.48) which contain the *here-and-now* dimension of Gerti's mental context of situation. However, whilst the addressee is striving to not allow this mental state to disappear leaving 'reality' in its place, some other images within the structure of the fourth stanza focus on the continuous flow of time which cannot be stopped even within the hallucinated 'bolla d'aria e di luce' (v.11) in which the addressee is floating. These

are the sinister images of 'le grandi ali / screziate' (vv.44-45) which skim over Gerti's skin, the 'esili bambole / bionde' (vv.46-47) and the 'pale dei mulini' (v.47) which 'rotano fisse sulle pozze garrule' (vv.47-48). The presents which Gerti has prepared for her absent friends have now turned into live objects which underline the climax of Gerti's imagined world, but, at the same time, their images denote a world which does not offer any answer or any new start to Gerti's destiny, only a repetitive and hallucinated world which is just as empty and mechanical as the one she has momentarily left: this is clarified by the mill-wheel paddles which churn on reminding the reader of the function of a clock. Gerti's mental state within the bubble of air cannot last, the bubble is destined to burst, and this happens, soon enough, in the fifth and last stanza of this poem.

In the final stanza the tense used is still the present, but now in connection with quite a different spatio-temporal situation. In line 55 the spatial co-ordinates are specified: the adverb 'quaggiù' defines, by contrast, a fall from the heights of Gerti's mental world, back down to 'reality' where the 'normal', linear function of time has been resumed: 'rimbombano / le ruote dei carriaggi senza posa' (vv.55-56), 'nulla torna' (v.57), 'col tempo che ti batte / al polso e all'esistenza ti ridona' (vv.60-61). However, in line 57-58 the deviation of existence is referred to by a proximal demonstrative adjective: 'questi / disguidi del possibile'. This creates an apparent contradiction with the fact that the speaking voice, after a momentary journey with Gerti into a world where the ticking of time had stopped, has come back into time-bound existence, as was confirmed by the use of the spatial adverb 'quaggiù'. The use of a demonstrative adjective of proximity suggests that even the speaking voice, in a final attempt to make his/her own the 'disguido del possibile' (v.58, my change),

is trying to not get back altogether to the 'normal' level of existence. This is further confirmed by the use of the distal spatial adverb 'là' (v.59) which defines the spatial co-ordinate where the speaking voice is inviting the addressee to return: 'Ritorna / là fra i morti balocchi' (vv.58-59). It is clear, at this point, that both the speaking voice and the addressee are momentarily still part of the hallucinated mental projection of a private existence. The real passage to the 'normal' concept of existence takes place when the 'normal' function of time is resumed in lines 60-61: 'e col tempo che ti batte / al polso e all'esistenza ti ridona'.

It is worthwhile noticing that throughout the text some of the verbs used by the speaking voice contained a prefix 'ri-' which, as has been seen in the analysis of 'Sul limite', could be formal-semantic signs of vicinity to liminality. In line 12 the verb 'ritrovare' is used; later in line 39 we find the verb 'riportare'; in line 41, 57, 64 and 67 the verb 'tornare' does not need the prefix 'ri-' to enclose the semantic meaning of the direction 'back(wards)' or 'again', although the verb 'ri-tornare' is used as a variant form in line 58. In line 61 the verb 'ridonare' is found. My claim is that in all the instances in which these verbs were used they refer, just like in 'Sul limite', to the entrance into or exit from liminality. The 'normal' function of time in 'Carnevale di Gerti' becomes null from the first line and precisely from the image of the wheel which stops because it is stuck in the dash of streamers. Liminality can, in this text, be interpreted as the wish to exit from the linear concept of time into a cyclical idea of time and existence, where man is no longer constrained into one unchangeable direction of existence, but has the power or possibility to go back and start again or vary his life.

The first line where the linear concept of time is re-established is line 55 where the spatial dislocation 'quaggiù' takes both the speaking voice and the addressee back down to 'reality', and where the ticking of time starts functioning again. The use of the verbs prefixed by 'ri-' now refers to the passage from the zone of liminality back into 'reality', the moment in which the addressee is given back to 'existence' by the resuming of the function of time: 'e col tempo che ti batte / al polso e all'esistenza ti ridona' (vv.60-61). The verbs containing the prefix 'ri-' either formally or semantically, strengthen the function of the deictic system of this poem as they refer to spatio-temporal directions and dislocations referring to liminality. However, in order for them to be interpreted correctly, they had to be analyzed in close connection with the spatio-temporal shifters such as adverbs, use of tenses, etc.²⁰

Finally, I would like to focus on the behaviour of *origo* deictics in the last stanza of 'Carnevale di Gerti'. It has been said that the poetic voice is momentarily lost in Gerti's mental world and that this is proved by the use of two deictic categories: a temporal deictic and an *origo* deictic. In the third stanza the poetic *persona* refers to New Year's Eve by using the past historic tense: 'si schiuse' (v.31) and 'si compì' (v.32). Later, reference is made to Carnival and December by use of a present tense: 'È Carnevale / o il Dicembre s'indugia ancora?' (vv.32-33). This creates a blurring between past and present in the poetic voice's concept of time. Later, in line 41, the first person plural personal pronoun 'ci', which functions as an *origo* deictic, is embedded within a series of second person singular personal pronouns 'ti' or 'tu', which marks the momentary common experience of both poetic voice and addressee. On analyzing the fifth stanza, it becomes clear that the poetic voice has now landed back in the 'normal' dimension of existence where time has started to flow again and

where space is defined as being 'quaggiù' (v.55). The poetic voice is inviting the addressee to come back down into reality by the use of the imperatives 'ritorna' (v.58) and 'torna' (v.64 and v.67) where Gerti's life is meant to be, 'la tua vita è quaggiù' (v.55), and where the poetic voice's life is meant to be too, 'torna alla vita dove con te intristisco, / quella che additò un piombo raggelato / alle mie, alle tue sere' (vv.64-66).

Both the speaking voice and the addressee belong to the same race 'al gorgo degli umani affaticato' (v.63).²¹ Their destinies are tied together, as was mentioned before, in a bond of twinship and this is made clear by the use of *origo* deictics used in lines 64 and 66: 'con te intristisco' (v.64), where the poetic voice and addressee are made part of the same spatio-temporal co-ordinates by the present tense and 'alle mie, alle tue sere' (v.66). In the last line, the expression 'le primavere che non fioriscono' (v.67), where 'primavere' rhymes with 'sere', contains a strong opposition which originates from the use of an oxymoron: a spring should bloom as the symbol of a new start after the winter. However the poetic voice's and addressee's springs do *not* bloom as they are both constrained to a mono-directional flow of time. In this sense their springs look more like evenings, i.e. assume the characteristics of the end of something (the day in this case) as opposed to what they should signify: the beginning of a new existence or the cyclical return to a previous state of existence.

It is clear, then, that in the fifth and last stanza the use of the *origo* category of deixis is a linguistic proof that Gerti's private experience of Carnival has come to an end. Her attempt to operate a fusion of time is abruptly given up between the fourth and fifth stanzas: as in the molten lead experiment, the partially fused sequence of past, present and future must re-crystallize into form.²² The whole of the white magic

experiment operated by Gerti in attempting to melt reality and the whole dynamics of the poem can be, therefore, recognized in the metaphor of the 'piombo fuso' (v.14) whose re-crystallized pattern indicates an earthly-bound common destiny which both Montale and Gerti are obliged to follow.²³

3.6 Conclusion

The analysis of 'Sul limite' has given us some linguistic tools which have proved to be useful in the interpretation of both 'Vasca' and 'Carnevale di Gerti'. In 'Vasca' verbs indicating images of opposition of movement, i.e. linear movement as opposed to non-linear movement, have been recognized as the trigger of the rupture of a two-dimensional reality into a momentary vision of a three-dimensional existence. In 'Carnevale di Gerti' the image of the 'ruota [che] s'impiglia nel groviglio / delle stelle filanti' (vv.1-2) creates the occasion for Gerti to see the conventional spatio-temporal co-ordinates dilate into a personal concept of existence: 'chiedi / tu di fermare il tempo sul paese / che attorno si dilata?' (vv.42-44). At the end of the poetic text it is the re-installation of the circular movement of another wheel, that of Gerti's watch, which brings her back to her everyday spatio-temporal situation 'tra le mura pesanti che non s'aprono' (v.62). In both poems the momentary vision of the Miracle is linguistically marked by the use of verbs which refer to a break out from Necessity. Return to Necessity is, however, unavoidable. The spell is soon broken, the moment of vision fades, and further verbs, semantically bearing the same amount of violence, do bring the discourse back to reality: such verbs contain the prefix 're-' which functions as a deictic element. As we have seen, then, through the

examination of Montale's use of deixis it has been possible to identify some linguistic signs which indicate entrance to and/or exit from liminality.

Notes

¹ The poetic voice describes the human condition as imprisoned within a claustrophobic 'orto' or a 'rete che ci stringe', or walled in as in 'Addii, fischi nel buio, cenni, tosse': 'È l'ora. Forse / gli automi hanno ragione. Come appaiono / dai corridoi, murati!' (vv.2-4, p.137). However, in other poems it is explained that the nature of the speaking voice is different from that of other men who do not ask questions about life, but, like 'automatons', live their life by blindly accepting it: 'Ah, l'uomo che se ne va sicuro, / agli altri ed a se stesso amico, / e l'ombra sua non cura che la canicola / stampa sopra uno scalcinato muro!' ('Non chiederci la parola', vv.5-8, p.27); 'Forse un mattino andando in un'aria di vetro, / arida, rivolgendomi, vedrò compirsi il miracolo: / il nulla alle mie spalle, il vuoto dietro / di me, con terrore di ubriaco' ('Forse un mattino andando', vv.1-4, p.40); 'Sono colui / che ha veduto un istante e tanto basta / a chi incammina incolonnato come ora / avviene a noi se siamo ancora in vita / o era un inganno crederlo' ('Gli uomini che si voltano', vv.22-26, p.376).

² In 'In limine' a wall encloses the speaking voice within a claustrophobic garden, similarly, in 'Dora Markus' the sea can be seen as another metaphor for the insurmountable obstacle which divides Dora from her country, a land which is placed beyond the spatial co-ordinates where she and her lover are placed.

³ In 'La speranza di pure rivederti' Clizia is described as an absent 'tu' or addressee whom the speaking voice is hoping to see again: 'La speranza di pure rivederti / m'abbandonava; / e mi chiesi se questo che mi chiude / ogni senso di te, schermo d'immagini, / ha i segni della morte o dal passato / è in esso, ma distorto e fatto labile, / un tuo barbaglio' ('La speranza di pure rivederti', vv.1-7, p.138). On the other hand, it has been seen that in 'La casa dei doganieri' the addressee is not described as simply absent, but as someone who has lost her memory: the loss of memory creates a situation where the relationship between voice and addressee cannot lead to any epiphany of the woman as was hoped in 'La speranza di pure rivederti'.

⁴ For further reference on the study of the opposition Miracle-Necessity see: Marchese (1977, pp.56-82); M. Brose (1984, pp.147-75).

⁵ The issue of liminality in Montale's poetry has been discussed by M. Brose (1984), R. West (1981) and R. Riccobono (1994).

⁶ For a further analysis of this point refer to E. Montale (1972).

⁷ The short story 'Sul limite' has already been seen by A. Pipa and, later, M. Moffa, as 'an amusing retelling of Dante's voyage [...] with its three divisions corresponding to Ante-Purgatory (Antelimite), Purgatory (Limite) and Terrestrial Paradise (Zone III). See Pipa (1968, pp.13-14). See also Moffa (1986, pp.168-71).

⁸ Glauco Cambon has written some beautiful pages on the use of the term 'entelechy' in Montale's poetry. See G. Cambon (1983, pp.110-11).

⁹ The glove has certainly been turned inside out: the dead are those who are really alive. Montale seems to repeat the same concept in other poetic texts: in 'A mia madre' the figure of the dead mother is described as 'living' in the Elysium: 'se tu cedi / come un'ombra la spoglia / (e non è un'ombra, / o gentile, non è ciò che tu credi) / chi ti proteggerà? La strada sgombra / non è una via, solo due mani, un volto / *quelle* mani, *quel* volto, il gesto d'una / vita che non è un'altra ma se stessa, / solo questo ti pone nell'eliso / folto d'anime in cui tu vivi' ('A mia madre', vv.5-14, p.203). By opposition, in 'Tuo fratello morì giovane; tu eri' the living are described as shades and, therefore, capable of loving shades of people they have never met: 'L'amavo senza averlo conosciuto. / Fuori di te nessuno lo ricordava. / Non ho fatto ricerche: ora è inutile. / Dopo di te sono rimasto il solo / per cui egli è esistito. Ma è possibile, / lo sai, amare un'ombra, ombre noi stessi' ('Tuo fratello morì giovane; tu eri', vv.8-13, p.293).

¹⁰ The presence of a screen is a recurrent theme in Montale's poetry: 'Forse un mattino andando' (p.42); 'Cigola la carrucola del pozzo' (p.47); 'La speranza di pure rivederti' (p.138). For an analysis of the metaphor of the screen in Montale's poetry refer to Rombi (1978). Giuseppe Antonio Camerino (1998, pp.57-68) stresses the equivalence of water surfaces and mirrors and identifies the theme of reflection as one of the central metaphors which Montale uses in the philosophical *iter* of his poetry. See also Grignani (1987, p.65). Bonora (1982, pp.101-4) indicates the surface of the pool as the mirror of one's soul.

¹¹ The speaking voice is not identified by a first person singular pronoun, but as one among the group identified by a first person plural personal pronoun 'alcuno di noi' (v.6, p.71). However, what is happening in the fictional context of the poem can be considered as a perception of the whole group, but at the same time of the speaking voice.

¹² I believe that, although no linguist has yet included adjectives within any deictic category, that the adjective 'altro' in this context has a deictic value. 'Altro' suggests the existence of another entity which is recognized as something different from what was perceived before on the pool's surface and refers to it by indicating it to both the poetic voice and the reader. I would identify the use of 'altro' as a referential deictic.

¹³ The verb 'erompere' is an interesting choice as it includes both the verb of vertical movement 'to break out of', and the verb 'rompere' which semantically reminds the reader of the 'maglia rotta' of 'In limine'. For further reference to verticality in Montale see Felix Siddell's article in *Montale. Words in Time* (1998, pp.99-106).

¹⁴ The past tense resumed in the final line of 'Vasca' is not a past historic, but a perfect tense. As Lepschy and Lepschy explain: 'The perfect is used to describe a

completed action which is still felt to be in some way linked to the present. [...] The past historic is the past tense used for completed action which is no longer related to the present.' See Lepschy and Lepschy, (1992, pp.228-29.) If so, it can be claimed that the poetic persona's mere observation of life in the first stanza is no longer possible after witnessing the actions of the unknown entity described in lines 9 to 13. After the experience of liminality, even if not in the first person, the speaking voice cannot resume the use of the past historic, but must adopt the perfect tense which indicate a relationship between the past events witnessed and the new concept of reality. The poetic *persona* has experienced a moment of limited vision beyond the two-dimensional screen and, although the screen has closed again, a two-dimensional concept of reality is no longer acceptable to him. In the economy of the poem, the vision of the third spatial dimension, i.e. volume, finds its temporal counterpart in the addition of the perfect tense to the use of the past historic and the present tense.

¹⁵ Rebecca West has referred to the tendency in Montale's poetry to 'dissolution into unnameability'. See West (1989, pp.214-15).

¹⁶ Montale explains that '“il piombo fuso” gettato a cucchiariate nell'acqua fredda dà luogo a incrostazioni e solidificazioni che permettono, a seconda delle varie difformità, astrusi oroscopi individuali.' See note to 'Carnevale di Gerti' in *L'opera in versi*, (1980, pp.897-99 [p.898]).

¹⁷ In a letter to Aldo Capasso dated 12 December 1929, (published posthumously) Montale explains the double genesis of 'Carnevale di Gerti': 'La fusione dei piombi consisteva in questo: alla mezzanotte del 31 dicembre 1927 io e Gerti fondemmo del piombo e lo versammo poi a cucchiariate nell'acqua fredda (una cucchiariata per ciascuno di noi e per ciascuno dei “presenti-assenti”). [...] La genesi della poesia è questo fatto, *doublé* di una successiva passeggiata in vettura, in carnevale, a Firenze. I due momenti nella poesia si fondono perché il tempo retrocede...'. See E. Montale, *Le occasioni*, ed. by D. Isella, 1996, p.41 [comment to vv.6-15]).

¹⁸ In 'La casa dei doganieri' the passage into liminality could be seen as occurring between the third and the last stanza of the poem. In the first three stanzas images of turning objects are contrasted with the flat and infinite line of the horizon: 'La bussola va impazzita all'avventura' (v.8, p.161), 'un filo s'addipana' (v.11, p.161), 'in cima al tetto la banderuola / gira senza pietà' (vv.13-14, p.161) as opposed to 'Oh l'orizzonte in fuga, dove s'accende / rara la luce della petroliera! / Il varco è qui?' (vv.17-19, p.161). For reference to images of opposition in 'Fuscello teso dal muro', see R. Riccobono (1994, pp.121-31).

¹⁹ Glauco Cambon argues that 'the *confusion* of time in the speaker's mind (between Carnival and New Year) is germane to the *fusion* of the lead that, at the very moment when everything is consummated and begins anew, reopens every possibility, the “deranging [*disguido*] of the possible”: a magical suspension, or parenthesis, of time, a momentary victory over mechanical and entropic time, a

resurfacing of the significant past into continuity and co-presence'. See G. Cambon (1983, p.41).

²⁰ Cambon claims that the use of verbs containing the prefix 'ri-' refers to three different directional motions of time in 'Carnevale di Gerti': an 'ascensive' one into a subjective temporalness; a cyclical one into a temporalness which is 'mechanical and artsonomic' and is 'extrinsically measurable'; finally, a descendant one 'as relapse into measurable time' (Cambon, 1983, pp.34-53 [p.52]). To Cambon's interesting point I would like to add that different directional motions of time and space seem to be organized in a systematic way through quite a few of Montale's texts and that this spatio-temporal dynamic system is closely connected to the theme of liminality.

²¹ Once again the idea of a circular movement is given, together with the idea of a dislocation downwards, which seems to reinforce the spatial adverb 'quaggiù' (v.55).

²² The theme of fusion of matter and re-crystallization into form is one of the main themes of Montale's poetry and it is present from the very first poem in *Ossi di seppia*. Some of the examples can be found in the following poems: 'In limine', 'vedi che si trasforma questo lembo / di terra solitario in un crogiuolo' (vv.8-9, p.5); 'Sul muro grafito', 'Chi si ricorda più del fuoco ch'arse / impetuoso / nelle vene del mondo; — in un riposo / freddo le forme, opache, sono sparse' (vv.5-8, p.48); 'Lasciando un "Dove"', 'ho amato il sole, / il colore del miele, or chiedo il bruno, / chiedo il fuoco che cova, questa tomba / che non vola' (vv.3-6, p.225); 'Il fuoco e il buio', 'E infine non occorre fuoco affatto, / anzi un buon sottozero tiene a freno / la tediosa bisava, l'Ispirazione' (vv.7-9, p.546).

²³ Cambon (1983, pp.34-53) refers to Gerti's powers of sorcery: 'A white sorceress, is what I had called Gerti at the outset, and as the good witch she is, she has indeed performed her sortilege, pouring into cold water the molten lead that [...] should foretell the future through the bizarre shapes int which it hardens [...]. But she is a defeated sorceress. If the end of stanza 1 commemorates the free moment, the instant opening of possibility [...], the poem's conclusion will feature "frozen lead," reality opaque and impervious once more under the vise of stiff limitation' (p.39).

Chapter Four: Poetic disintegration and the dynamics of the Montalian voice

4.1 Introduction

Continual disintegration is characteristic of the reality described by the Montalian texts, time goes by and corrodes everything: the living, the dead, memory. Time is disintegrated into moments which are unrepeatable and nevertheless eternally repeated: existence, thus, results in a series of actions repeated by man as an automaton, without the possibility of controlling them. On analyzing the traditional concepts of space and time in Montale's poetry from the point of view of deixis, it has been noticed that they show a partial tendency to dissolution into the *limen* where time and space cease to imprison the poetic persona(e), even if only momentarily, and where a possible salvation may be found, for the addressee if not for the poetic voice. However, salvation has been recognized as bearing duplex signs which raise doubts on whether 'infinatarsi' is a wise way out of the Montalian 'rete che [...] stringe' ('In limine', vv.15-16, p.5) concept of reality.

The poetic voice is somehow the only constant presence (by choice) within the garden of life: other *dramatis personae* and addressees leave and come back, experiment with time and space, forget and are forgotten. The speaking voice, on the other hand, is the only stable element in a poetry of continuous destruction and impossibility of knowledge. Yet, one may wonder how stable the Montalian poetic voice really is. If he is prisoner of the spatio-temporal garden of life, it may only be logical to assume that he is subjected to the same 'logorìo' ('Lontano ero con te', v.3, p.136) as is everything else present therein.

The scope of this chapter is that of analyzing the nature of the speaking voice(s) and studying its possible dynamics within the Montalian poetic text. My analysis will start with some considerations on poems from both seasons of production, i.e. the so called 'first' and 'second Montale', in order to point out the dynamics of the Montalian poetic voice(s) of the second season, from *Satura* onwards, and compare them to those of the 'single voice' in the poetry from *Ossi di seppia* through to *La bufera e altro*.¹

4.2 Failure of poetry and the role of the poetic voice

It has been seen that from *Ossi di seppia* the Montalian concept of reality is represented by a wall-enclosed garden where existence is suggested to be a mere existing of objects next to each other kept together by invisible links and levers which Montale expects to fail and reveal the real nature of existence at any moment as in 'Avrei voluto sentirmi scabro ed essenziale'.² The mechanism of time which gives a mono-directional shape to existence, cannot be seen in its entirety of past-present-future, but is perceived by the Montalian voice as a co-existence of present actions ('gli eventi del minuto', *ibidem*, v.14, p.57) ready to disintegrate. Both spatial and temporal dimensions are connoted by disaggregation: not only is man obliged to live within insurmountable limitations, but he has no possibility of knowing and making sense of the meaning of his existence, if the chain of events is casual and not controllable. The constant aim of the poetic voice, the possible salvation indicated in 'In limine', is that of breaking out of the claustrophobic spatio-temporal limitations and the superficial appearance of reality in order to obtain a truthful and unitary vision of the world.

Reality as seen superficially is a 'limbo squallido delle monche esistenze' ('Crisalide', vv.37-38, p.85): only the presence of the lover, Clizia-Iride can save the poet from the 'tedio malcerto' ('Il balcone', vv.3-4, p.105) or emptiness of existence and help him see beyond the screen of memory. However, the paradox is this: Clizia is the absentee by default and looking for the sign of her presence becomes the main issue in *Occasioni* and especially in 'Mottetti'. Finding Clizia's sign coincides with the potential epiphanies so faithfully awaited all along the poetic path and those epiphanies, as Martelli (1977) has shown, can be seen to coincide with poetry itself. The equation is Poetry-Clizia. Poetry then could be the means to a unitary reading within the disintegration of reality.³

The only unitary element in the Montalian universe is the poetic voice which tries in all possible ways to take shape following the example of the sea-father and using a language 'dove natura ed arte si *confondono*' ('Potessi almeno costringere', v.8, p.58, my italics). Yet there is a recognition that the poet's voice and poetry are 'sillabe / che rechiamo con noi, api ronzanti' ('Noi non sappiamo quale sortiremo', vv.18-19, p.56), 'un'eco' (*ibidem*, v.20, p.56) of the voice of the sea. Nevertheless, a unitary voice remains the vehicle through which the unitary reading of reality can be achieved and is, in a way, the guarantor of poetry itself.

Despite Montale's efforts to emulate the sea-father's unitary voice, in his poems the poetic voice does not always remain a single voice: in some instances it splits into multiple voices which create a highly dialogical overall effect within the structure of the text. This is the case especially in the poetry of the second season of Montale's production. Montale's poetic language from *Satura* onwards becomes a mirror of all aspects of reality and reflects a varied experience of the world which cannot be

contained any longer by a monologic language, the language that Montale had struggled to keep together until *La bufera e altro* in order to find a unitary reading of reality.⁴ The dispersion of his attempted unitary poetic language gives way to the disintegration of his poetic style and text into a multitude of fragments. This plurality of style and language, which is typical of the poetry from *Satura* onwards, reflects a reality which lacks a central traditional meaning. The reality which is expressed from *Satura* onwards is based on empty values, as was in the first three books, with the difference that now there is no search for what lies beyond its boundaries, there is no plan to create a language through which it is possible to chant and unify what is disintegrated and accepted as such. If from *Ossi* through to *La bufera* there may be identified a constant effort to safeguard the philosophical-soteric value of poetry, from *Satura* onwards, as Barile notes (1990, p.113), a new aspect of Montale's poetry emerges slowly: his tendency to 'accidia', or sloth or indifference. In 'L'immane farsa umana' Montale declares his lack of interest in reality and his decision to find a refuge in the 'zona intermedia / che può chiamarsi inedia o accidia o altro' (vv.5-6, p.596). This tendency to sloth turns into the total dissolution of the 'tu' (the intermediary between the 'io' and the 'absolute', i.e. the presence of a woman-angel) and finally into a total demolition of his previous poetic images:

Si dirà: sei colui che cadde dal predellino
 e disse poco male tanto dovevo scendere.
 Ma non è così facile distinguere
 discesa da caduta, cattiva sorte o mala. 10
 Ho tentato più volte di far nascere
 figure umane, angeli salvifici
 anche se provvisori; e se uno falliva
 né si reggeva più sul piedistallo
 pronta e immancabile anche la sostituta 15
 adusata alla parte per vocazione innata

di essere il *doppio* sempre pronta al decollo
 alle prime avvisaglie e a volte tale
 da onnubilare dell'originale
 volto falcata riso pianto tutto 20
 ciò che conviene al calco più perfetto
 di chi sembrò vivente e fu nessuno.
 ('L'immane farsa umana', vv.7-22, p.596)

The visiting angel who had grown to be the necessary and only way of salvation from the 'logorìo / di prima' ('Lontano, ero con te quando tuo padre', vv.3-4, p.136) or the erosive action of time, and even assumed a Christ-like role in *La bufera e altro*, is overturned completely in the derisory intonation: the difficult metaphysical flights, which the visiting angel was at times not able to complete, are in 'L'immane farsa umana' taken over very easily and aped by a stunt angel. The poetic voice openly and ironically declares his failure by admitting that the new kind of poetry is not characterized by a mere lowering ('discesa', *ibidem*, v.10, p.596) but by an actual collapse ('caduta', *ibidem*, v.10, p.612) of intonation.⁵ Demolishing the visiting angel is a metaphorical way of admitting the failure of his poetry in general. His faith in poetry ('una speranza che fu combattuta, / [...] una speranza che bruciò più lenta / di un duro ceppo nel focolare', 'Piccolo testamento', vv.9-12, p.267) was what held his poetry together despite the continuous tendency to disintegration.

The loss of a unitary poetic plan entails a partial dissolution of the unitary poetic voice. As a matter of fact, the organization of the poetic voice from *Satura* onwards includes the presence of more poetic voices in some poems where a poetic voice is not recognizable as narratorially superior to other voices. For example in '“Pregava?”. “Sì pregava Sant'Antonio' (p.290) the narration of the fictitious confession is recounted by

seppia through to *La bufera e altro* show other speaking voices which are present within the fictional context, but always alongside the main poetic voice which has a narrator's role. For example in 'I morti' the dead are the choral poetic voice of the first 28 lines, after which the narration is taken over by another poetic voice which can be considered as the main narrator of the poem. (See the analysis of 'I morti', section 2.6, pp.77-85).

In 'Voce giunta con le folaghe' from *La bufera e altro* the main narrating voice is that of the son which introduces the figures of the dead father and that of Clizia, the shade who comes to save the soul of the father. At one point of the narration Clizia speaks in the first person, however her speech, even if it cannot be heard by the son, is clearly subordinated to his voice which remains the main narrating voice in the poem. This is clear from the use of the long hyphen which formally marks the place where a character's voice interrupts the narrator's.⁶

si scambiano parole che interito
sul margine io non odo

— Ho pensato per te, ho ricordato
per tutti...

('Voce giunta con le folaghe', vv.27-28 and vv.34-35, p.250)

In the poems of the first three books other speaking voices are present within the text structure as secondary voices, i.e. subordinated to the main narrating voice, whilst in later poems other voices appear which are not formally governed by a main poetic voice. In other words, the poems from *Ossi di seppia* through to *La bufera e altro* are organized around a single poetic voice which is also a narrating voice and which suggests a unitary concept of poetic narration (and therefore of poetry) as a possible

means of a unitary reading of reality. In the poetry from *Satura* onwards the previous unitary concept of poetry is lost and along with it the requirement of a single poetic-narrating voice. Reality is interpreted as a puzzle of smaller pieces one next to the other and the poetic voice is but one of these pieces, alongside other aspects of reality and other voices, voices which disappear into nothingness just as quickly as they emerged from it.

Looking more deeply at the poetry of the first three books it is, however, possible to identify a presence of multiple voices within structures which superficially appear as wholly contained by a main poetic and narrating voice. It can be claimed that even in the poetry of the first season Montale's poetry presents a text structure which does not revolve completely around a single poetic voice, but potentially contains more voices. An examination of a number of texts will show that Montale's poetry, which has already shown a tendency to spatio-temporal dissolution, is constructed around a narratorial centre which is of dynamic nature.

Firstly, I shall analyze 'Il fiore che ripete' (p.148), which, at a first reading, appears to be a text containing a single unifying voice, in order to show that the Montalian poetic voice contains in itself a tendency to dissolve into 'echoes'. Secondly, I will focus on 'Voce giunta con le folaghe' where the distinction between the main or narrator's voice and other voices is clarified by the presence of *dramatis personae* within the organization of the text which are indicated by deictic elements which create shifts of the deictic centre. This shows that Semino is correct in saying that 'poems do not necessarily project unique and stable voices located within fixed deictic contexts, but may involve variations in deictic centre' and therefore 'in the discoursal role or identity of the speaking persona' (1995, p.145). In this sense, the presence of more than one

speaking voice in some of his texts stresses further the dynamic nature of Montale's poetic voice. Lastly, in the final section of this chapter, I will analyze two poems ('Riflessi nell'acqua' [p.528] and 'Hamburger steak' [p.612]) in order to look more closely at the mingling of voices within the narratorial structure of some of the poetry of the 'secondo Montale'.

4.3 Echoic effect in 'Il fiore che ripete'

Il fiore che ripete
dall'orlo del burrato
non scordarti di me,
non ha tinte più liete né più chiare
dello spazio gettato tra me e te.

5

Un cigolio si sferra, ci discosta,
L'azzurro pervicace non ricompare.
Nell'afa quasi visibile mi riporta all'opposta
tappa, già buia, la funicolare.

Spatial deictics:

'opposta' (v.8)

Origo deictics:

'non scordarti' (v.3)

'di me' (v.3)

'tra me e te' (v.5)

'ci' (v.6)

'mi' (v.8)

Subjective Deictics:

None

Temporal deictics:

'ripete' (v.1)

'non scordarti' (v.3)

'ha' (v.4)

'si sferra' (v.6)

'discosta' (v.6)

'mi riporta' (v.8)

Syntactic deictics:

'non scordarti' (v.3)

Referential deictics:

'il fiore' (v.1)

'dall'orlo' (v.2)

'del burrato' (v.2)

'dello spazio' (v.5)

'l'azzurro' (v.7)

'nell'afa' (v.8)

'l'opposta tappa' (v.8)

'la funicolare' (v.9)

Discourse deictics:

'del burrato' (v.2)

The poem opens with the image of a flower introduced by the speaking voice within the structure of a relative clause which includes a report of the flower's message: 'Il fiore che ripete / dall'orlo del burrato / non scordarti di me' (vv.1-3). If in line 1 the flower is referred to as a third person referent ('il fiore che ripete', v.1), in line 3 the message of

the flower ('non scordarti di me', v.3, a transposition of the flower's name: 'nontiscordardime') is reported through the use of free direct speech and therefore the flower itself becomes a first person speaker: 'non scordarti di me' (v.3). Both the use of the personal pronoun 'me' (v.3) and of the imperative 'non scordarti' (which function as *origo* deictics) mobilize a further speaking voice within the fictitious context, even if only metaphorical, which momentarily interrupts the main voice. However, the poem presents a Chinese-box narratorial structure where the fictional voice of the forget-me-not remains narratorially subordinated to the main voice. As a matter of fact, the voice of the forget-me-not is syntactically embedded within the main narrator's speech (i.e. it is introduced by a reporting verb, 'che ripete', v.1) but is presented to the reader without report marks, i.e. through free direct speech. This allows the second voice to emerge from its subordinated narratorial role and stand independently (even if only momentarily) at the same level of the narrator's voice. (See G. Leech and M. Short, 1981, pp.322-24)

The speaking voice and the addressee are clearly introduced through *origo* deictics only from line 5 ('tra me e te'): this belated introduction underlines the prominence of the image of the flower in the text. It may be noticed that the flower grows on the verge of a ravine between two mountains 'l'orlo del burrato' (v.2). The 'burrato' is introduced by a definite article which identifies it as part of shared knowledge between speaking voice and addressee, but also between speaking voice and reader, as other abysses have been met previously in Montale's poems.⁷ Growing on the verge of an abyss is already very dangerous; thus repeating 'non scordarti di me' becomes a desperate cry by the secondary voice: the forget-me-not does not want to fall into the emptiness (its roots will prevent that), but asks especially not to fall into the darkness of forgetfulness. The

abyss, which creates a breach of space between two mountains, becomes, therefore, a metaphorical image of the process of forgetting: the image of a breach within the temporal dimension of memory. 'Non scordarti di me' is a very probable thing that two lovers might say to each other before parting for a very long time. This is the message fictionally repeated by the flower (or attributed to it by the human observer), to the two lovers as an echo after them.

The fictional parting between the speaking voice and addressee also becomes an occasion for the poet to remind the reader of the value of poetry as a means of knowledge. If the flower referred to in this poem is the same flower of the epigraph to 'Mottetti' ('sobre el volcán la flor', p.131) then it may be seen as a symbol of poetry. The forget-me-not in this way would not only become a powerful metaphor of the beauty of poetry, but above all, of its function within Montale's linguistic search of knowledge. The message 'forget-me-not' attributed to the flower can be seen to fictionally act as a *memento* to the reader, as well as a pledge of love and faithfulness between the two lovers repeated by the lovers themselves and to the lovers by the flower. In this way, it is possible to envisage the presence of more than one voice which creates an echoic effect and a duplex message within the structure of the poem.

Although the main poetic voice controls the narration of the poem, in the first stanza the main voice gives voice to the flower, or lets the flower interrupt him, even if momentarily. Montale's texts belonging to the first season of production do allow the infiltration of more than one voice within their structure. This underlines the fact that the poet's voice is not always a unifying factor within Montale's poetry and that Montale's poetry being the product of his 'balbo parlare' ('Potessi almeno costringere', v.5, p.58) cannot act as a means of unitary reading of reality. Reality remains

uninterpreted and so do the voices which are encountered in it, solitary echoes of a disunited original language (the language of the sea-father of *Mediterraneo*, the *Logos*, 'la lingua di Dio') which has been lost to man and which it is impossible to re-create.

The speaking voice is alone existentially, but also linguistically, and this is stressed further by first-person *origo* deictics. In line 3 the imperative 'non scordarti di me' tries to make sure that the addressee does not forget the poetic persona-flower by negating the verb 'scordare' and uniting syntactically the second person pronoun suffix 'ti' and the first person pronoun 'me'. Therefore, syntactically and semantically 'me' and 'te', the poetic voice and his woman will hopefully remain united. Likewise, in line 5 the two person pronouns 'me' and 'te' are part of a parallel syntactic construction 'tra me e te', which once more underlines their unity. In line 6, the two first and second person pronouns are united grammatically in the first person plural pronoun 'ci' which indicates complete unity and fusion of two people into a collective subject, into a twinship of souls. However, if grammatically 'ci' indicates unity, semantically the verb following 'discosta' indicates division and disunion. It is at the moment when unity would have been possible, that detachment occurs and man's condition of solitude is reconfirmed by the return to the first person singular pronoun 'mi' in 'mi riporta' (v.8): time does not stop flowing and corroding the past, memory fades and cannot re-unite what has been left behind in man's lonely journey called life.

4.4 Narrating voice and *dramatis personae* in 'Voce giunta con le folaghe'

Poiché la via percorsa, se mi volgo, è più lunga
del sentiero da capre che mi porta

dove ci scioglieremo come cera,
 ed i giunchi fioriti non leniscono il cuore
 ma le vermene, il sangue dei cimiteri, 5
 eccoti fuor dal buio
 che ti teneva, padre, erto ai barbagli,
 senza scialle e berretto, al sordo fremito
 che annunciava nell'alba
 chiatte di minatori dal gran carico 10
 semisommerse, nere sull'onde alte.

L'ombra che mi accompagna
 alla tua tomba, vigile,
 e posa sopra un'erma ed ha uno scarto
 altero della fronte che le schiara 15
 gli occhi ardenti ed i duri sopraccigli
 da un suo biocco infantile,
 l'ombra non ha più peso della tua
 da tanto seppellita, i primi raggi
 del giorno la trafiggono, farfalle 20
 vivaci l'attraversano, la sfiora
 la sensitiva e non si rattrappisce.

L'ombra fidata e il muto che risorge,
 quella che scorporò l'interno fuoco
 e colui che lunghi anni d'oltretempo 25
 (anni per me pesante) disincarnano,
 si scambiano parole che interito
 sul margine io non odo; l'una forse
 ritroverà la forma in cui bruciava
 amor di Chi la mosse e non di sé, 30
 ma l'altro sbigottisce e teme che
 la larva di memoria in cui si scalda
 ai suoi figli si spenga al nuovo balzo.

— Ho pensato per te, ho ricordato
 per tutti. Ora ritorni al cielo libero 35
 che ti tramuta. Ancora questa rupe
 ti tenta? Sì, la battima è la stessa
 di sempre, il mare che ti univa ai miei
 lidi da prima che io avessi l'ali,
 non si dissolve. Io le rammento quelle 40
 mie prode e pur son giunta con le folaghe
 a distaccarti dalle tue. Memoria
 non è peccato finché giova. Dopo
 è letargo di talpe, abiezione

che funghisce su sé... — 45

Il vento del giorno
 confonde l'ombra viva e l'altra ancora
 riluttante in un mezzo che respinge
 le mie mani, e il respiro mi si rompe
 nel punto dilatato, nella fossa 50
 che circonda lo scatto del ricordo.
 Così si svela prima di legarsi
 a immagini, a parole, oscuro senso
 reminiscenze, il vuoto inabitato
 che occupammo e che attende fin ch'è tempo 55
 di colmarsi di noi, di ritrovarci...

Spatial deictics:

'questa' (v.36)

'quelle' (v.40)

Origo deictics:

'mi' (v.1)

'mi' (v.2)

'ci' (v.3)

'eccoti' (v.6)

'ti' (v.7)

'padre' (v.7)

'mi' (v.12)

'tua' (v.13)

'tua' (v.18)

'per me' (v.26)

'io' (v.28)

'(non) odo' (v.28)

'ho pensato' (v.34)

'per te' (v.34)

'ho ricordato' (v.34)

'ritorni' (v.35)

'ti' (v.36)

'ti' (v.37)

'ti' (v.38)

'miei' (v.38)

'io' (v.39)

'io' (v.40)

'mie' (v.41)

'son giunta' (v.41)

'distaccarti' (v.42)

'dalle tue' (v.42)

'le mie mani' (v.49)

'mi' (v.49)

'occupammo' (v.55)

Temporal deictics:

'porta' (v.2)

'(non) leniscono' (v.4)

'accompagna' (v.12)

'posa' (v.14)

'ha' (v.14)

'schiara' (v.15)

'(non) ha' (v.18)

'trafiggono' (v.20)

'attraversano' (v.21)

'sfiora' (v.21)

'(non) si rattrappisce' (v.22)

'scorporò' (v.24)

'(non) odo' (v.28)

'mosse' (v.30)

'sbigottisce' (v.31)

'si scalda' (v.32)

'ho pensato' (v.34)

'ho ricordato' (v.34)

'ora' (v.35)

'ritorni' (v.35)

'tenta' (v.37)

'(non) si dissolve' (v.40)

'rammento' (v.40)

'son giunta' (v.41)

'confonde' (v.47)

'respinge' (v.48)

'mi si rompe' (v.49)

'circonda' (v.51)

'si svela' (v.52)

'occupammo' (v.55)

'attende' (v.55)

Referential deictics:

'la via percorsa' (v.1)

'del sentiero' (v.2)

'i giunchi' (c.4)

'le vermene' (v.5)

'ai barbagli' (v.7)

'al sordo fremito' (v.8)

'nell'alba' (v.9)

'sull'onde alte' (v.11)

'l'ombra' (v.12)

'della fronte' (v.15)

'le schiara' (v.15)

'gli occhi ardenti' (v.16)

'i duri sopraccigli' (v.16)

'l'ombra' (v.18)

'i primi raggi' (vv.19-20)

'la trafiggono' (v.20)

'l'attraversano' (v.21)

'la sfiora' (v.21)

'la sensitiva' (v.22)

'si rattrappisce' (v.22)

'l'ombra fidata' (v.23)

'il muto' (v.23)

'quella che' (v.24)

'l'interno fuoco' (v.24)

'colui che' (v.25)

'si scambiano' (v.27)

'sul margine' (v.28)

'l'una' (v.28)

'la forma' (v.29)

'Chi' (v.30)

'la mosse' (v.30)

'l'altro' (v.31)

'la larva di' (v.32)

Syntactic deictics:

'di noi' (v.56)
 'ritrovarci' (v.56)
 'Ancora questa rupe ti
 tenta?' (vv.36-37)

Subjective Deictics:

None

Discourse deictics:

'sull'onde alte' (v.11)
 'l'ombra' (v.12)
 'rupe' (v.36)
 'la battima' (v.37)
 'il mare' (v.38)
 'il vento' (v.46)

Negations:

'non leniscono' (v.4)
 'non ha' (v.18)
 'non si rattrappisce' (v.22)
 'non odo' (v.28)
 'non si dissolve' (v.40)
 'non è peccato' (v.43)

Referential deictics:

'al nuovo balzo' (v.33)
 'al cielo libero' (v.35)
 'questa' (v.36)
 'la battima' (v.37)
 'il mare' (v.38)
 'l'ali' (v.39)
 'quelle' (v.40)
 'le folaghe' (v.41)
 'il vento' (v.46)
 'l'ombra viva' (v.47)
 'l'altra ancora' (v.47)
 'nel punto' (v.50)
 'nella fossa' (v.50)
 'lo scatto del ricordo'
 (vv.50-51)
 'il vuoto inabitato' (v.54)

The narration is introduced by a poetic persona identified by the reflexive personal pronoun 'mi', 'se mi volgo' (v.1) and by the direct object first-person pronoun 'mi', 'che mi porta' (v.2).⁸ The mode of narration adopted by the poetic voice shows participation in the events which are being recounted as the central tense is the present tense: 'mi porta' (v.2), 'non leniscono' (v.4), 'mi accompagna' (v.12). In line 3 the reader comes across a first-person plural reflexive pronoun, 'ci', which can only be interpreted as an inclusion of the narrator's destiny in the destiny of humankind.⁹ Therefore 'ci' clarifies that the role of the speaking voice must be interpreted as assuming a symbolical value of 'warning' for humanity, giving the poem 'Voce giunta con le folaghe' an allegorical flavour beside its private dimension of an encounter between Montale and his father.¹⁰

Other *origo* deictics which are of interest to this analysis are the second-person pronouns 'ti', which is part of the adverbial expression 'eccoti' (v.6), the direct object pronoun 'ti' ('ti teneva', v.7) and the vocative 'padre' (v.7). Through these *origo*

deictics the relationship between the speaking voice and his father is clarified as a dialogue, even if it is one-sided.¹¹

A new participant in the fictitious context is introduced in line 12: 'l'ombra che mi accompagna'. The shade is referred to by use of third-person pronouns, therefore it becomes part of the fictitious context but does not take active part in the linguistic enunciation: 'le schiara / gli occhi ardenti' (vv.15-16), 'l'ombra non ha più peso della tua' (v.18), 'i primi raggi / del giorno la trafiggono' (vv.19-20), 'farfalle / vivaci l'attraversano' (vv.20-21), 'la sfiora / la sensitiva' (vv.21-22). The only poetic *personae* taking active part in the linguistic event (the dialogue) are the son and the father as respectively speaker and hearer.

In the next stanza both shades are described by the speaking voice as third person participants in the fictitious context of utterance. The speaking voice is still the same, but the father who was previously a hearer, i.e. actively involved in the son-father act of communication, is now referred to by a third-person pronoun: 'il muto che risorge' (v.23), 'colui che lunghi anni d'oltretempo / [...] disincarnano' (vv.25-26) and 'l'altro' (v.31). Thus the narration becomes a monologue and the speaking voice becomes a solitary narrator. A strong separation is maintained between the two shades and the speaking voice: 'quella che scorporò l'interno fuoco / e colui che lunghi anni d'oltretempo / [...] disincarnano' vv.24-26) and '(anni per me pesante)' (v.26). The use of the parentheses separates '(anni per me pesante)' even more from the description of the shades: '(anni per me pesante)' being embedded within the main sentence results in its being united to it structurally but separated from it formally: united and separated at the same time as the dead and the living were described in 'I morti': 'ed i mozzi / loro voli ci sfiorano pur ora / da noi divisi appena' (vv.36-38).

The two shades 'si scambiano parole che interito / sul margine io non odo' (vv.27-28). This sentence anticipates the shift in the role of the speaking voice which will take place in the next verse from line 34. The narrator thus anticipates through the use of the *origo* deictic 'io', the present tense verb 'udire' in the negative ('non odo', v.28) his exclusion from the new dialogue between Clizia ('l'ombra fidata', v.23) and the father-figure ('il muto che risorge', v.23). The new dialogue, from which the son is now excluded, is clarified by the shift of speaker-hearer roles marked by *origo* deictics: Clizia adopts the first-person pronoun ('Ho pensato per te, ho ricordato / per tutti', vv.34-35) and addresses the father-figure with the second-person pronoun ('Ora ritorni al cielo libero / che ti tramuta', vv.35-36; 'Ancora questa rupe / ti tenta?', vv.36-37).

Clizia, the new speaking voice, is engaged in the utterance in an observational mode of discourse: 'ho pensato per te, ho ricordato / per tutti' (vv.34-35).¹² The role of narrator of past actions (thinking and remembering) is clarified by the use of the past tense which creates a distinction between coding and content time. The speaking *persona* is acting as an adviser to the father's soul and, moreover, is assuming the role of a Christ-figure. It is necessary for the father's soul to go back to the 'cielo libero / che ti tramuta' (vv.35-36) so that he may shed his terrestrial memory and unbody 'l'interno fuoco' (v.24), as Clizia has already done: this is the reason why Clizia has accompanied the son to his father's grave.

At this point it is possible to say that there is a visible difference between the two shades: one of them ('l'ombra fidata', v.23; and 'l'ombra viva', v.47) can be recognized as the 'fantasma che salva', the ghost endowed with the powers of salvation to which Montale had alluded right from the very first poem in *Ossi di*

seppia, 'In limine'. The other shade is a ghost which needs to be saved through the loss of his earthly memory. The former is 'quella che scorporò l'interno fuoco' (v.24), i.e. the one who has undergone the process of de-materialization mentioned in the short story 'Sul limite' (*La farfalla di Dinard*, pp.226-27) (see also Chapter Three, pp.90-94); the latter is one whom 'lungli anni d'oltretempo / [...] disincarnano' (vv.25-26).¹³ In other words although they are both shades, as is explained in 'Sul limite', they belong to different phases of the process of liminality. The soul of the father is presented to us as a 'larva rimorsa dai ricordi umani' and his fear of forgetting and being forgotten becomes evident in the following lines: 'ma l'altro sbigottisce e teme che / la larva di memoria in cui si scalda / ai suoi figli si spenga al nuovo balzo', vv.31-33). Memory, once again, proves to be the keyword of another of Montale's poetic texts and it is through memory that it becomes possible to stay or to go. Even the 'ombra fidata', the Christ-figure, is tempted to stay, even if only for a moment. She herself replies to her question addressed to the father with the affirmative adverb which indicates desire: 'Ancora questa rupe / ti tenta? Sì, la battima è la stessa / di sempre' (vv.36-38).

It is interesting at this point to analyze closely the poetic persona of the Christ-figure from the deictic point of view. Clizia was defined a voice whose mode of narration in lines 34-37 was observational and therefore detached. However, in lines 37-41 her momentary worldly nostalgia is underlined: the Christ-figure is tempted by memory and affectionately refers to her land when she was alive as 'i miei / lidi' (vv.38-39)¹⁴ and by recognizing the sea-shore and the sea (which are referred to by definite articles which function both as referential and discourse deixis) which were clearly geographical settings of her land: 'Sì, la battima è la stessa / di sempre, il mare

che ti univa ai miei / lidi da prima che io avessi l'ali / non si dissolve' (vv.37-40). But she soon detaches herself from the world, yet in tones of deep love for it: 'Io le rammento *quelle / mie* prode' (vv.40-41, my italics). In this fashion Clizia reveals her human and divine nature which are present in her at the same time, strengthening even more her Christ-like poetic function. The use of a distal demonstrative pronoun 'quelle' (v.40), which functions both as referential and spatial deictic, underlines Clizia's detachment and the *enjambement* foregrounds both 'quelle', as line end, and 'mie' as the start of the new line. In this fashion the two deictics indicating detachment from the world and love, and possession of it, are formally given identical weight in the semantic value of the sentence. Soon after the speaking voice regains the status of adviser not only to the father's soul, but also to herself and indirectly to the son: 'Ho pensato per te, ho ricordato / per tutti' (v.34).

In the poem 'I morti', the dead were literally trapped in a limbo-like existential dimension where their condition was that of 'larve rimorse dai ricordi umani' (v.33, p.93), who had not met 'il fantasma che [...]salva'. In 'Voce giunta con le folaghe' there are two options for the father: either to stay on the 'rupe' and be a 'larva rimorsa dai ricordi umani' or to go back to the sky and assume a new memory and unbody 'l'interno fuoco', i.e. de-materialize. Since it is likely that the only path to immortality is through the memory persisting in one's children, the father comes back to the 'rupe' to meet his son. However, detaching from the 'rupe' is hard and the father's shade is still reluctant to leave in line 47 after Clizia has stopped speaking.

As from line 46 the narration has been resumed by the speaking voice identifiable with the son's, this is indicated by a new deictic shift whereby the two shades are referred to by definite articles 'l'ombra viva e l'altra ancora' (v.47) and the son uses

the first-person possessive adjective to refer to his hands 'le mie mani' (v.49) and the first-person reflexive pronoun 'il respiro mi si rompe' (v.49). The son's final gesture to his father is that of offering him his hands, but this is rejected. The father's soul is still undecided about whether to stay or to go, but the communion between son and father is interrupted as staying is no longer a means of enrichment for the father, but becomes 'peccato', 'letargo di talpe' and 'abiezione'.

The poem, which had opened with an initial dialogue between son and father, which was later replaced by a dialogue between Clizia and the father's soul, closes on a monologue in which the son, who is left on the 'rupe' by himself, draws some considerations on the value of memory. Memory is described by the speaking voice as a 'punto dilatato' (v.50) and as encircled by a 'fossa'(v.50) and, finally, as 'il vuoto inabitato / che occupammo' (vv.54-55), as something ephemeral and deathly which is, however, like a trap, waiting for us: 'e che attende fin ch'è tempo / di colmarsi di noi, di ritrovarci...' (vv.55-56).¹⁵ As soon as one tries to cross the time boundary, as Gerti had tried to do in her molten lead experiment, then the deathly face of the past (the Other side of time) shows itself. In 'Carnevale di Gerti' white magic had opened a temporary (even if only at the level of dream) breach in the temporal barrier between present and past, therefore Gerti's spatial-temporal surroundings 'i muri che si fendono già' (v.42, p.121) showed access to a world ('il paese / che attorno si dilata', vv.43-44, p.121, my change) which revealed itself as deathly ('Le grandi ali / screziate ti sfiorano', vv.44-45, p.121). Likewise, in 'Voce giunta con le folaghe' the father's memory of life and the son's memory of the father create a breach in the temporal barrier between past and present, death and life, a breach ('punto dilatato', v.50) which soon reveals deathly connotations ('la fossa', v.50, both in the sense of

'ditch' and 'grave'). The past is over, is what we were and we cannot hold it with us ('si deforma il passato, si fa vecchio, / appartiene ad un altro...', 'Cigola la carrucola del pozzo', vv.6-7, p.45): it is with this meaning that the speaking voice describes past as 'il vuoto inabitato / che occupammo'. The past and memory of it, ultimately, do not offer any salvation from contingency and temporality, but only continuous danger and attraction as if the vacuum of past and memory needed to attract matter to fill itself: 'e che attende fin ch'è tempo / di colmarsi di noi, di ritrovarci...' (vv.55-56). Therefore, re-activating our past equals jumping into the trap, into emptiness, losing oneself in a vacuum where one can only be alone with one's memories. In the concluding notes to her study of time images in *Ossi di seppia*, Elisabetta Graziosi has underlined that 'oltre a questo tempo distruttivo non c'è tempo, l'immobilità è solo morte, la distruzione è vita, e su questo paradosso il circolo si salda' (1972a, p.180). The present is the only dimension available to man and despite all the experiments to search for an alternative temporal dimension, the present is always resumed in the Montalian text and destiny of man (and thus of the speaking voice) is to stay within his own dimension, the garden of life, and to be consumed by the action of time: imprisoned and yet happier to be so than annihilated in the 'fuordeltempo' ('La pendola a carillon', v.26, p.477).

At this point, it is possible to understand the thematic (and therefore linguistic) need for more than one voice and deictic centre within the text: the speaking voice identifiable with the son attempts to establish communication with the father in order for both of them to remember each other; the second speaking voice, Clizia, brings with her a sign of salvation, not from temporality, but from 'letargo' and 'abiezione', the limbo-like static existence-in-death to which the dead of 'I morti' were

condemned. The two speaking voices are thus complimentary within the text and both their dialogues with the father acquire a meaning so that 'conversation, communion and love' between father and son may be prolonged 'finché giova' (v.43) but stopped before it may start to 'funghire su sé' (v.45, my change).

4.5 Unity behind multiplicity?

It has been seen in the previous sections of this chapter that though the poetry of Montale's first season tends to be narratorially and linguistically controlled by a single voice, the presence of multiple voices and *dramatis personae* is not infrequent. The refraction of the poet's voice into multiple voices, which are recognized by Scrivano as internal voices ('voci che provengono a lui dalla propria interiorità', 1966, p.325), indicates the presence of a complex dialogue with the self and thus the internal instability and dynamic nature of the Montalian voice. The plurality of style and voices of the second poetic period seem to present a type of narration not always controlled by a single voice. The unity behind the apparent multiplicity is however safeguarded by the poet when he declares that 'in me i tanti sono uno anche se appaiono / moltiplicati dagli specchi' ('Il tu', vv.5-6, p.273). Although it is true that the source of fictitious characters in a literary text is unequivocally the author's experience and understanding of the world, it is nevertheless necessary to examine why an author decides to create a number of projections and duplicates of him/herself which may give rise to many different voices and characters, and especially so in a genre like the lyric poem where the interplay of characters is less frequent for reasons of space. It is important to understand why a writer has a need to hide behind different masks and what effect this creates in a poetic text. Creating a mask has the purpose of

creating a particular fictitious role within the dynamics of a text: this can be identified as a process of creating a poetic and linguistic construct, an 'I' who fictionally detaches itself and becomes autonomous from the author, but conceptually is still dependent on him/her. However, Montale in 'Il tu' (p.273) warns his reader not to forget that behind the poetic constructs or voices in his texts there is a real mind that pulsates, that there is unity hiding behind multiplicity.

It has been seen that the partial dissolution of a single poetic voice into multiple voices closes into a single-voiced control of the text in both 'Il fiore che ripete' and in 'Voce giunta con le folaghe' ('Nell'afa quasi visibile *mi* riporta all'opposta / tappa, già buia, la funicolare', 'Il fiore che ripete', vv.8-9, p.148, my italics; '[...] le *mie* mani, e il respiro *mi* si rompe', 'Voce giunta con le folaghe', v.49, p.250, my italics). Temporal and spatial dimensions showed a dynamic nature inasmuch as their claustrophobic limitations showed temporary openings to different concepts of time and space, but always shut compulsorily to the three-dimensional reality which the speaking voice was not able and willing to leave. In the same way, the attempt to refract the single poetic voice, is always temporary: it underlines that the Montalian voice is identified by the poet himself as a stutter ('Certo / meglio che nulla siamo / noi fermi alla balbuzie', 'La lingua di dio', vv.6-8, p.445), but it always attempts to re-gain control over the poetic language. It is this constant return to the single voice (and to recurrent images even if overturned, as will be seen later in Chapter Seven) which, despite the linguistic and thematic dissolution of Montale's second season texts, keeps his poetic universe together. But one may question how long the effort to safeguard a 'single voice' is able to re-unite what has clearly already disintegrated.

Discourse deictics:

'qui' (v.3)

Temporal deictics:

'disse' (v.8)

'pensò' (v.9)

Syntactic deictics:

None

Subjective deictics:

None

This text, which is written as an aphorism of strong platonic-heraclitean flavour, presents a person deictic in line 2, 'nostra', which introduces the fictitious poetic voice ('il monologante', v.3) as including himself within a larger plural group, humankind, whose living conditions in the age of consumerism are being considered. The poem opens with the first few lines of an interrupted aphorism, but the reader realizes this only in line 3, when another voice takes over narration: 'ma qui il monologante / si specchiò nel ruscello'. This is clear because the voice which was speaking in the first-person plural pronoun, is now referred to by the definite article 'il' (v.3) which functions as a referential deictic and which clarifies that 'il monologante' is being observed by somebody else who has now become the deictic centre. The new deictic centre is not identified by any *origo* deictics, but by a temporal deictic, a past historic tense, which sets the temporal dimension of the context in the past 'si specchiò' (v.4). The second poetic voice describes the monologist as looking at his reflection on the water ('Vi si vedeva / una sua emanazione ma disarticolata / e sbilenca', vv.4-6), which is not a mere reflection but an emanation, i.e. it is part of his being, in other words a double of himself. Looking in a mirror is a narcissistic act, but perception of one's reflected image coincides with knowledge of one's existence. The monologist sees his reflection as a distorted image of himself, an image in which he can barely recognize himself and which later also disappears. The theme in this poem is that of searching for oneself, but all one sees is

an unrecognizable self or no-one. The theme is by no means a new one in Montale's poetry, as it may be traced as far back as 'Non chiederci la parola', 'Cigola la carrucola del pozzo', 'Vasca', 'Casa sul mare', and other poems. However, in 'Riflessi nell'acqua' the appearance of one's double coincides with a doubling of the poetic voice. The new poetic voice can be described as engaged in an observing mode of discourse and this is indicated by his use of the past historic; whilst the monologist's voice is engaged in an experiential mode of discourse and that is clarified by his use of present tenses, which are non deictic in this case because they refer to the universal and general nature of aphorisms, but which, nevertheless, coincide with the tense expressing coding time. If the second voice is the observing entity, then perhaps the image reflected on the water is the real self, the observing self, which would leave the monologist to be identified as the emanation, as the observed double, the unreal or virtual image. The encounter with one's double may then be suspected to be a momentary encounter with one's real self, and the moment the reflection disappears is the moment in which one is left alone, lost again within the universe of shadows to which one belongs. The mirror where the philosopher sees the projection of his image is the surface of 'il ruscello', referred to by a definite article, a referential element which underlines in this case familiarity or reference back to other mirror-images such as the pond's surface in 'Vasca'.¹⁶ The surface of the stream could be made to coincide with a possible 'varco' where the philosopher (and perhaps also the emanation, in this sense both of them would be 'riflessi', which would clarify the masculine plural agreement of the title 'Riflessi nell'acqua') could have possibly stepped through to the Other side. The meeting point-varco is the mirror's surface. The vision of his double is the 'distorto e fatto labile, [...] barbaglio'

(‘La speranza di pure rivederti’, vv.6-7, p.138), or the brief moment of vision which is revealed to the poetic voice and then disappears without leaving any sign behind.

The juxtaposition of more than one voice which speaks freely without formal boundaries such as inverted commas or dashes is more typical of Montale’s later poems. In ‘Riflessi nell’acqua’ the two speaking voices are told apart from each other only thanks to the presence of temporal deictics which indicate shifts of two separate deictic centres. The poem is narratorially construed on a juxtaposition of free direct speech and free indirect speech: the former indicates a ‘narrator who is apparently not in control’ of the speech report (and thus of the narration), the latter suggests a narrator who is only ‘in partial control of’ narration (Leech and Short, 1981, p.324). In this sense whilst the narrator’s voice remains only a narrator, the monologist is both a *dramatis persona* and a narrator (at least at the opening of the poem, vv.1-3). The use of free indirect speech, mingles the thoughts and considerations, but also the narrator’s and the character’s (in this case the monologist’s) vocabularies and syntactic orders (See Pascal 1977; Leech and Short, 1981, pp.323-36; Aristar Dry, 1995, pp.96-112). ‘Consumo’ (v.1), ‘necessità’ (v.1), ‘obliterare’ (v.2), ‘sopprimendo la quale’ (v.3), and the conclusion of the philosophical reasoning (‘la fine può procedere / a passo di lumaca’, vv.8-9) are terms and syntactical constructions which belong to the field of philosophy. On the other hand, ‘si specchiò nel ruscello’ (v.4), ‘una sua emanazione [read: ‘immagine’ of ‘Cigola la carrucola’, v.4, p.45] ma disarticolata e sbilenca’ (vv.5-6), bring the reader back to the familiar images of Montale’s poetry from *Ossi di seppia*. However, Montale’s poetry has been defined as philosophical. Thus, the mixture of vocabularies and syntax allows a partial empathy between narrator and character. In a sense, it may be possible to say that the narration

is controlled partially by both voices, although there is a clear attempt by the narrator's voice to re-absorb the monologist's voice under his control. This is clear because of the use of a reporting verb ('disse', v.8) and the distancing use of third-person pronouns, possessive adjectives and verbs: 'si specchiò' (v.4), 'vi si vedeva' (v.4), 'una sua emanazione' (v.5), 'pensò' (v.9). In this mingling of two separate voices, it is possible to see the surging of a dual voice which creates a fragmentation effect and reminds us of the refraction of poetic personae referred to in 'Il tu'.

Another similar case is proposed by the poem 'Hamburger steak' (p.612) where another philosopher's voice (that of 'l'escatologo', v.2) speaks next to a second narrating voice.

Il tritacarne è già in atto ha blaterato
l'escatologo in furia; e poi a mezza voce
quasi per consolarci: speriamo che il suo taglio
non sia troppo affilato.

Spatial deictics:

None

Origo deictics:

'consolarci' (v.3)

'speriamo' (v.3)

Temporal deictics:

'ha blaterato' (v.1)

'poi' (v.2)

'speriamo' (v.3)

Referential deictics:

'il tritacarne' (v.1)

'l'escatologo' (v.2)

'il suo taglio' (v.3)

Discourse deictics:

None

Syntactic deictics:

None

Subjective deictics:

None

The pauses present within the context of the poem are those of spoken language, not those of literary versification, and the presence of the adverbs 'in furia' (v.2) and 'a mezza voce' (v.2) function as, almost, stage directions on how the poem should, in fact, be read. Direct and indirect speech are juxtaposed in 'Hamburger steak' without any formal sign whatsoever of role change between narrating voice and *dramatis*

persona: 'Il tritacarne è già in atto ha blaterato / l'escatologo in furia' (vv.1-2). Such boundaries are, in fact, set by the use of temporal deictics: the present tense 'speriamo' (v.3), on one hand, identifies the eschatologist's voice, the perfect tense 'ha blaterato' (v.1), on the other hand, is connected to the narrating speaking voice: temporal deictics are therefore the only elements which point out the linguistic shift between the two voices. At the same time, two *origo* deictics underline the subtle boundary between the two voices: though both *origo* deictics are first-person plural pronouns, they refer in turn to the narrating voice who feels one with humankind in awaiting the eschatologist's worrying conclusion ('consolarci', v.3), and with the eschatologist's voice who includes himself as part of humanity's destiny ('speriamo', v.3).

Another element which should not be overlooked is the grotesque, but at the same time, darkly comical effect of comparing time to a mincer ('tritacarne', v.1) and mankind to meat: in other words, mankind is 'dead meat' for 'hamburger steaks'. Man's destiny has never been promising in Montale's poetry, but towards the second season of poetry it starts to assume a grotesque quality. This is an issue which will be tackled in the next two chapters, where a further dissolution of the Montalian text, its themes and some metaphors, will be studied from the point of view of heteroglossia.

4.6 Conclusion

The poetic voice mobilized in Montale's text has shown to be partly subjected to dissolution, in the sense that it is not unique and stable throughout the whole poetic production, but other poetic voices, or echoic effects accompany it. On analyzing poetic voices from a linguistic perspective, it has been underlined that shifts of the

deictic centre can occur during the poetic narration, and also changes in the mode of discourse in which the same poetic voice relates himself to the events he recounts. This seems to happen more often in Montale's second stage of poetry, where shifts of voices occur without previous textual signs which may anticipate such a change.

The more frequent presence of multiple voices or echoes within his texts, and the employment of an ironical-comical (even if darkly comical) style show that Montale's poetry is subtly introducing polyphony and heteroglossia, even if the poet stresses unity behind multiplicity. In the next chapters, the study of heteroglossia in Montale's poetry will show the reader that along with the spatio-temporal and voice dissolution, also a thematic disintegration occurs within the poetic text which from *Satura* onwards assumes new features, new intonations and new poetic effects.

Notes

¹ Montale refers to the two poetic seasons of his production (*Ossi, Occasioni* and *La bufera* on one side, and from *Satura* onwards on the other side) as the 'recto' and 'verso' of the same page. (See E. Montale, 'Ho scritto un solo libro', in *Sulla poesia*, pp.601-07 [p.606]). More emphasis will be given to the the passage from the first to the second season in Chapter Five.

² 'Volli cercare il male/ che tarla il mondo, la piccola stortura / d'una leva che arresta / l'ordegno universale; e tutti vidi / gli eventi del minuto / come pronti a disgiungersi in un crollo' ('Avrei voluto sentirmi scabro ed essenziale', vv.10-15, p.57).

³ On this point see Martelli (1977, pp.9-27), Brose (1984, p.160) and Riccobono (1994, p.115).

⁴ Angelo Jacomuzzi (1978, pp.105-34) has analyzed Montale's poetic language as the product of a failed linguistic project which had been hypothesized in *Ossi di seppia* and by the end of that collection had been discarded as impossible. In his opinion, throughout *Le occasioni* and *La bufera e altro* the project of the total language is demolished, and from *Satura* stuttering is recognized as the only language which may approach some kind of fragmentary knowledge. The total language 'la lingua di Dio' is compared to non-communication and emptiness, whilst fragmentary language is 'un segno di elezione' (p.118).

⁵ Although I am aware that 'intonation' is essentially a phonetic term in English, Montale (1977, pp.192-93) in commenting on his change of poetic taste has used the term 'intonazione' (in the musical sense of it) which Rebecca West has translated into 'intonation' (1981, p.94).

⁶ More emphasis will be given to 'Voce giunta con le folaghe' later in this chapter, in section 4.4, pp.149-66.

⁷ See 'le inutili macerie del tuo abisso (v.21, p.52) in 'Antico, sono ubriacato dalla voce'; 'sul rialzo a strapiombo sulla scogliera' (v.2, p.161) in 'La casa dei doganieri'; 'e po lo schianto rude, i SISTRI, il fremere / dei tamburelli sulla fossa fuia' (vv.16-17, p.189) in 'La bufera'; 'nel cupo / singulto di valli e dirupi / dell'altra emergenza' (vv.30-32, p.210) in 'Ballata scritta in una clinica'.

⁸ Although all deictic elements have been listed after the text, focus in the analysis of this poem will be centred on *origo* deixis, not all deictics will be included in the discussion.

⁹ The effect of generalization produced by the personal pronoun 'ci' (v.3) in the opening stanza of 'Voce giunta con le folaghe' can be compared to the effect of the opening tercet of Dante's *Comedy* 'Nel mezzo di cammin di nostra vita', where Montale's life-journey ('il "sentiero da capre": la via del cimitero o l'esistenza che ci

avanza?' [*Tutte le poesie*, Note ai testi, p.1099]) is referred to by the poet as short and difficult.

¹⁰ In 'Voce giunta con le folaghe' the speaking voice, accompanied by the 'ombra fidata', undertakes a journey through the 'underworld' to meet the shade of his father. As Rebecca West has made clear, despite its close resemblance to Dante's or Aeneas's journey to the underworld, Montale's journey does not embody 'the consolation of [Dante's] firm faith or [Virgil's] desolation of *inanità*', but 'both recognizes the inevitable dissolution of *mortalia* and embodies [...] a form of continuing life that prolongs "beyond the threshold of death" conversation, communion and love' (1989, p.224).

¹¹ The figure of the father in 'Voce giunta con le folaghe' can be related to another father-figure in a previous poem-in-prose, 'Dov'era il tennis...' (pp.215-16): 'Pochi sentirono dapprima che il freddo stava per giungere; e tra questi forse mio padre che anche nel più caldo giorno d'agosto, finita la cena all'aperto, piena di falene e d'altri insetti, dopo essersi buttato sulle spalle uno scialle di lana, ripetendo sempre in francese, chissà perché, "*il fait bien froid, bien froid*", si ritirava subito in camera per finir di fumarsi a letto il suo Cavour da sette centesimi.' The word 'scialle' links the two father-figures. A similar father-figure is portrayed in the partly autobiographical and partly fictional collection of short stories *La Farfalla di Dinard* (1960, pp.24-30) 'Donna Juanita'. Other elements in 'Voce giunta con le folaghe' such as the presence of the sea (referred to by metonymy, 'sull'onde alte', v.11; 'battima', v.37) and the 'rupe' (v.36, perhaps the same 'rupe' of 'La casa dei doganieri') may be interpreted as identifying the natural setting of the text as Liguria. 'Voce giunta con le folaghe' seems to contain elements which identify the speaking persona as a strongly autobiographical voice.

¹² The difference between the observational and the participating mode of utterance has already been clarified and exemplified in the analysis of the poem 'Vasca' (Chapter Three, pp.95-98).

¹³ For a further explanation of the metaphor of 'fire' and 'love' see G. Savoca (1982, pp.385-411).

¹⁴ As the 'ombra fidata' has been compared to a Christ-figure, it is possible to refer lines 36-38 to Christ's temptations whilst in the desert. See *St Matthew*, 4, 1-11; *St Luke*, 4, 1-13.

¹⁵ 'Il vento del giorno' (v.46), on one hand, and 'il punto dilatato' (v.50), 'la fossa' (v.50) and 'il vuoto inabitato' (v.54), on the other hand, can be considered as opposite elements present within the fictitious context which are recognizable within the Montalian poetic universe from our previous reading of other poems (that is why they are referred to by definite articles which creates a sense of familiarity). 'Il vento' can be associated with the stir of (after)life and the shaking off of lethargy which the 'ombra fidata' (v.23) bring to the father's shade, in order to persuade him to proceed to the next 'balzo' towards his Nirvana. The wind's utility is that of turning the

'morto viluppo di memorie' which the father is still attached to, into fruitful memories which can help him proceed towards his destiny (see also the interpretation of 'il vento' in 'In limine' [Chapter Two, p.63] and the reading of 'Sul limite' where the need to remember in order to proceed is clarified [Chapter Three, pp.108-14). 'La fossa' is the emptiness, 'il vuoto inabitato', which symbolizes absence of life, the vacuum created by excessive lingering on memory.

¹⁶ In Chapter Seven it will be pointed out that referential deictics which point back or forward to other images present within the whole body of Montale's poetry may be seen to function also as discourse deictics, because they refer the text to other chunks of texts within the Montalian macro-text.

Chapter Five: Heteroglossia as a sign of disaggregation

5.1 Introduction

The first four chapters of this study of Montale's poetry have focused on the textual dissolution of space, time and poetic voice seen from the point of view of the organization of the deictic system. The purpose of this and the next chapter is to analyze some aspects of heteroglossia in Montale's poetic language in order to examine further the disintegration of Montale's language and poetic text from the point of view of theme and voice. It will become clear how new metaphors slowly appear in the text next to more classical ones used from *Ossi* and bring Montale's language to assume grotesque, comical (and darkly comical) and satirical intonations. Through the study of heteroglossia it will be possible to view and understand some of the stylistic changes which Montale's poetry show in the second season of production.

In this chapter I shall firstly consider some of the motivations for the study of heteroglossia in connection with poetry. I will then apply some of these considerations to Montale's poetry and to his use of poetic language. Finally, I shall focus on the text of 'Il sogno del prigioniero', a pivotal poem for understanding the poetic and linguistic changes which occur between Montale's first three books and the later production from *Satura* onwards.

5.2 Heteroglossia and poetic silence

The heteroglossic nature of language has been most fully explored by Mikhail Bakhtin in his theory of the novel in the 1930s.¹ Bakhtin studied in depth the origins of the novel and its language from Ancient Greek prototypes, where the language and the characters were monological, up to modern times, via its development during Roman times through to the Renaissance when, in his opinion, the elements of laughter and satire introduced heteroglossia and polyphony into the language of the novel. His affirmations on the subject spring from his belief that the language of a text is not to be seen as the creation of its author: language owns the author, who becomes a vehicle for it. When a word is uttered it brings with it all the semantic accents and intentions attached to it through all its previous utterances in different contexts. In this sense, each word has an internal dialogical nature which prevents it from having a single value. Language is the product of a whole society and its linguistic and social mechanisms are percolated through an author into a text. In this way, the linguistic orchestration of a text is partly a reflection of the social orchestration of language, partly an attempt by the author to unify the social centrifugal forces and give the text one meaning and shape.²

Whilst Bakhtin recognizes the language of the novel as heteroglossic, he fails to see that poetic language can abide by the same principles. Bakhtin defines the poetic genre as linguistically isolated from all other literary genres and the poetic word as independent from possible interaction with other discourses which can only be viewed as distant from and alien to that of poetry. Poetry is therefore considered as a self-sufficient genre:

The language of the poetic genre is a unitary and singular Ptolemaic world outside of which nothing else exists and nothing else is needed. The concept of many worlds of language, all equal in their ability to conceptualize and to be expressive, is organically denied to poetic style.³

According to Bakhtin, not only is poetry an isolated genre within the social orchestration of language, but in times when the socio-political reality has become hostile, poetry undergoes a process of ossification: in other words the natural language of poetry is replaced by an artificial one.⁴

What Bakhtin views as the ossification of poetry, or its change towards a more authoritarian and dogmatic style of poetic language, leads, at one extreme, to the silencing of poetry. Silence as a philosophical and political stand has been recognized as a rhetorical technique in the poetics of the twentieth century.⁵ Poetry in a hostile world finds itself incapable of expressing the surrounding reality. However, intentional silence as an extreme answer to a hostile socio-political situation finds its counterpart in another extreme, yet opposite reaction: the desecration and dispersal of the absolute value of the written word. Silence may, in a sense, be seen as an extreme form of logocentricity: it is non-fragmentary and absolute, a mirror of the absoluteness of divine *Logos*.⁶ On the other hand, the dispersal of the word and the diffusion of its meaning into multiple and polyphonic signifiers represent the socially heteroglossic ensemble of language. If purists of language search for the unitary, the logocentric and the priestly value of the word, heteroglossia view language as a mirror of a reality through which truth is linguistically 'divided up between endless mirror-images' (Geyer-Ryan, 1988, p.201). In this way it is clear that silence and heteroglossia are opposite but complementary phenomena, i.e. they

underline opposite strategies by the author of the text, who needs however, in both cases, to find a way to express the inexpressible.

5.3 Silence, heteroglossia, and disaggregation in Montale

The question of silence and dispersal of the value of the word can be viewed as central in the poetry of Eugenio Montale, especially in the years intervening between the publication of *La bufera e altro* and the shaping of *Satura*. In the opening poem of *Satura*, 'Il tu' (p.275), a clear reference is made by Montale to a poetic persona and a reality which are broken down into endless mirror-images. This seems to furnish the reader with a clue on how to read the following poems in *Satura* and in later books. It should be remembered that *Satura* is the result of a long period of poetic silence and marks a change in technique and voice in Montale's poetry (See Carpi, 1971; Grignani, 1987, pp.117-37). Montale's silence transforms itself into heteroglossic language and, ultimately, the adoption of heteroglossia as a writing device represents a need to *bavarder*, or to talk nonsense: to mimic the 'blabla / dell'alta società' ('Non ho mai capito se io fossi', vv.5-6, p.285).

Bakhtin claims that:

languages of heteroglossia, like mirrors that face each other, each reflecting in its own way a piece, a tiny corner of the world, force us to guess at and grasp for a world behind their mutual reflecting aspects that is broader, more multi-leveled, containing more and varied horizons that would be available to a single language or a single mirror. (Bakhtin, DIN, pp.414-15)

In the same way, it is possible to say (see Chapter Four, pp.111-12) that Montale's

language from *Satura* onwards becomes a mirror of the different aspects of reality and reflects a varied experience of the world which cannot be contained any longer by a monologic language, the language that the poet had struggled to keep together until *La bufera e altro* in order to find a unitary reading of reality. The dispersal of his attempted unitary language gives way to the disintegration of his poetic style and unity into a multitude of fragments which are typical of Montale's poetry in the later collections.⁷ This plurality of style and language reflects a polyphonic reality which lacks a central traditional meaning, a reality which is based on empty values and which can only be expressed by the language of nonsense. The poetry of a reality based on nothingness springs from the closure towards the metaphysical dimension and from the dismissal of the awaited epiphanies which had characterized his poetry from the outset. It is the moment of passage from the earlier to the later style, from the 'primo Montale' to the 'secondo Montale' which is the focus for this study of heteroglossia in his language and of the disintegration of his poetic values. This moment of transition will be considered through the analysis of 'Il sogno del prigioniero'.

Montale's poetic excursus from *Ossi di seppia* to *Diario postumo* can be pictured as a path which turns dramatically with a hairpin bend at one point of its evolution, namely between *La bufera e altro* (1956) and *Satura* (1971). Montale describes the two periods of his poetry-writing as the *recto* and *verso* of the same experience (Montale, 1975, *Sulla poesia*, 1976, p.606). Whilst the main thrust of the first three books involves a tension towards breaking free of spatio-temporal-historical barriers into a more or less metaphysical experience, the later production is characterized by a reworking of previous

questions and metaphors, but with a rather sharp change of intonation. This 'ripiegamento' or 'ribaltamento' of his poetry is coupled with the use of a new poetic discourse which has been described by some critics as the sign of Montale's entrance into the hell of Nothingness (Cambon, 1983, p.244; Barile, 1990, p.110).

The publication of *Satura* follows a long period of poetic silence after *La bufera e altro*.⁸ With *La bufera*, the poetry of the first season of production reached a level of *saturation* which could only allow for either silence or a new kind of poetry, as *Satura* would show in the following years. The ten-year silence seem to have involved a radical re-think of his approach to poetic discourse and ends with a new type of poetry, partially in terms of theme, but especially in voice. During an interview with Annalisa Cima in 1977, Montale admits a change in his 'musical' taste in his later production:

Quando scrivevo i primi libri non sapevo che avrei raggiunto gli ottanta anni. Passati gli anni, guardandoci dentro ho scoperto che si poteva fare altro, l'opposto anche. Poi c'è un fatto di orecchio musicale (i critici non ne tengono abbastanza conto): ho voluto suonare il pianoforte in un'altra maniera, più discreta, più silenziosa. Ma tutto è nato spontaneamente, non ho programmato nulla. (Cima, 1977, pp.192-93)

As well as a need for musical change, Barile claims that Montale's need for *bavardage* springs from his obsessive vision of Nothingness around him and the instinctive desire to exorcize it:

non sembra azzardato ipotizzare una vicinanza dell'ultima fase poetica di Montale a quella importante zona della letteratura europea del secondo novecento la cui modalità consiste nel *bavardage*: quando la parola diventa urgente a colui che sospetta la propria inesistenza. Solo il *bavardage* enuncia, esorcizzandolo, il nulla che ha da dire, così come la 'furiosa nomenclazione' di *Ossi*, secondo la nota

lettura di Contini, esorcizzava con la parola lo 'schermo di immagini' della realtà. (Barile, 1990, p.98)

The thin veil which separates silence from the poetry of *bavardage* is the object of my analysis in this chapter. In particular, I will show how Montale's language adopts a more heteroglossic accent, i.e. becomes less monologized. The embracing of heteroglossia following on from a more monologized language may be interpreted as a sign of the linguistic disintegration of his poetic universe.

As was said in Chapter Four (section 4.2, p.111) reality is already connoted by disintegration from *Ossi di seppia*. The aggregation of elements which form reality are described by the poet through a syntax of images which surprises the reader due to the complete lack of logical connections between such images.⁹ The technique of object naming creates a vacuum around the poetic images with the result that they are perceived as naked presences out of any context and 'ammucchiate alla rinfusa come in un vecchio magazzino' (Avalle, 1977, p.126, my change): seeking a connection between them is useless because there is no connection or meaning, and if there is one it is unknowable. The only possible way to a unitary reading of reality would be through poetry, but poetry coincides with a series of epiphanies that are rare and revealed by signs ('barbagli', 'lampi', 'folgore', 'sciacalli') which disappear as quickly as they appear. The phenomenon of poetry is therefore as disintegrated ('lampi che s'accendono / e si spengono', 'I presseapiers', vv.8-9, p.581) as the reality which it would like to chant. As was seen in Chapter Four, the project of creating a language and a poetry which could unify what is disaggregated, fails. Once poetry fails, two extreme possibilities are open to

Montale, namely silence or heteroglossia, i.e. the embracing by the poet of linguistic varieties which were previously excluded from his poetic language. Just as the technique of object-naming portrayed reality in its disintegrated nature by presenting objects which are unrelated by any possible link, set next to each other, so in some respects, embracing heteroglossia, or a variety of available social languages, can be seen as another way of showing the presence of various aspects of reality not always necessarily connected, but nevertheless juxtaposed and clashing with each other in social linguistic terms. The failure of his poetry means that the only unitary means of reading reality is lost and disaggregation occurs within the text. From *Satura* poems consist of various texts belonging to different genres: aphorisms, telephone calls, syllogisms and so on.¹⁰ Linguistic registers include all possible fields: the language of the first three books is superseded by a more varied language and gives access to styles which include comedy, the farcical, the obscene (the so-called 'Montale fecale' or 'stercale') which co-exist alongside the survival of more classical forms used in previous years. From *Satura* onwards the 'blabla / dell'alta società' takes over as a technique: it is the inane and meaningless use of language which becomes the only possible way to fill and disguise the frightful emptiness of reality.¹¹ However, although Montale's new language can superficially give the impression of mere chattering, deep down it is charged with poignancy, brutal astuteness and courage to demolish everything and everybody starting from his own self.

Those ten years of silence between *La bufera* and *Satura* do leave a deep mark in the change of his language, intonation and philosophical-ideological outlook. However, there

are also some signs present *a priori*, at the close of *La bufera*, which can be seen *a posteriori* to anticipate the poetic change. An examination of 'Il sogno del prigioniero' will show how this poem is a key text connecting the earlier to the later Montale.

5.4 'Il sogno del prigioniero'

Albe e notti qui variano per pochi segni.

Il zigzag degli storni sui battifredi
nei giorni di battaglia, mie sole ali,
un filo d'aria polare, 5
l'occhio del capoguardia dallo spioncino,
crac di noci schiacciate, un oleoso
sfrigolio dalle cave, girarrosti
veri o supposti — ma la paglia è oro,
la lanterna vinosa è focolare
se dormendo mi credo ai tuoi piedi. 10

La purga dura da sempre, senza un perché.
Dicono che chi abiura e sottoscrive
può salvarsi da questo sterminio d'ocche;
che chi obiurga se stesso, ma tradisce 15
e vende carne d'altri, afferra il mestolo
anzi che terminare nel *paté*
destinato agl'Iddii pestilenziali.

Tardo di mente, piagato
dal pungente giaciglio mi sono fuso 20
col volo della tarma che la mia suola
sfarina sull'impiantito,
coi kimoni cangianti delle luci
sciorinate all'aurora dai torrioni,
ho annusato nel vento il bruciaticcio
dei buccellati dai forni, 25
mi son guardato attorno, ho suscitato
iridi su orizzonti di ragnateli
e petali sui tralicci delle inferriate,
mi sono alzato, sono ricaduto

nel fondo dove il secolo è il minuto —

30

e i colpi si ripetono ed i passi,
e ancora ignoro se sarò al festino
farcitore o farcito. L'attesa è lunga,
il mio sogno di te non è finito.

The theme is that of the dream, a theme which Montale had already used in his previous poems.¹² Savoca (1987) in his concordance of Montale's poems records 39 examples of lexemes such as 'sogno', 'sognare' and 'sognatore' and most of the occurrences are from *Satura* onwards, only 13 of these altogether occur in *Ossi*, *Occasioni* and *La bufera*. The theme of the dream is therefore one which is present from the beginning of Montale's poetic activity, but comes to the fore in the later period of production. The theme of the poem, however, is not simply that of dream, but of a 'prisoner's dream'. Although lexemes such as 'prigione' and 'prigioniero' only occur 8 times within the whole body of Montale's poetry, the metaphor of the prison is closely connected to other metaphors of claustrophobic places where the poetic voice is effectively imprisoned. In *Ossi* we find, for example, 'la rete / che ci stringe' (vv.15-16, p.5) and the 'erto muro' (v.9, p.5) of 'In limine'; the 'muraglia / che ha in cima cocci aguzzi di bottiglia' (vv.16-17, p.28) of 'Meriggiare pallido e assorto'; in *Occasioni* the 'gabbia o cappelliera?' (v.6, p.123) of 'A Liuba che parte' and the 'mura pesanti che non s'aprono' (v.62, p.121) of 'Carnevale di Gerti'. Thus, in 'Il sogno del prigioniero' the reader is dealing with themes which belong to Montale's poetic universe from *Ossi di seppia*.

In the first line of 'Il sogno del prigioniero' the spatio-temporal co-ordinates of the poetic discourse are set, the time being an everlasting present and the space being the

prison: 'Albe e notti qui variano per pochi segni' (v.1). The prison is described as a place where time seems to have stopped, where there is very little difference left between night and day, between sleep and waking, or between dream and reality.¹³ If night and day, dream and reality are hardly distinguishable within Montale's prison, the themes of dream and reality-prison are also only distinguishable by few linguistic signs within the economy of the text.

The prison is never mentioned directly, but is referred to by metonymy: 'i battifredi' (v.2), 'i giorni di battaglia' (v.3), 'l'occhio del capoguardia dallo spioncino' (v.5). 'Il zigzag degli storni sui battifredi / nei giorni di battaglia' (vv.2-3) is an interesting variant of the motif of flight, which in Montale's earlier poetry had always been connected to angels or birds and was associated primarily with the various metaphysical flights experienced by Clizia-Iride. Firstly there is a strongly marked lexical choice of 'zigzag', introducing a very different register and tone to that of Clizia's 'voli' (similar choices of vocabulary and tone occur throughout the later collections).¹⁴ This term is then inserted into the overall image-complex of 'battifredi...giorni di battaglia', characterizing this new jerky flight in strongly negative terms. Furthermore, the flight is that of a group, a flock, reminiscent perhaps more of the collective 'formicaio' (for which Montale has such contempt — see 'Botta e risposta II', II, v.17, p.346) than of the exceptional, redemptive 'voli' of Clizia. Now, however, such an impoverished, perhaps even sinister flight represents 'mie sole ali' (v.3). (One might also compare the image used here to the implied flight of the angel of damnation, the 'ombroso Lucifero' of this poem's companion piece, 'Piccolo testamento', p.267.) There is also a sense of the mechanical,

the automated, in the starlings' zigzag movement. Previously, flight had symbolized the only possibility of escape from contingency, 'la rete / che ci stringe' ('In limine', vv.15-16, p.5), to the ataraxy of 'il falco alto levato' ('Spesso il male di vivere ho incontrato', v.8, p.33) or the metaphysical journey in search of the sign of 'Ti libero la fronte dai ghiaccioli' (p.144). On the other hand, jerky, mechanical movements such as the rhythm of the train ('Presti anche tu alla fioca / litania del tuo rapido quest'orrida / e fedele cadenza di carioca?', 'Addii, fischi nel buio, cenni, tosse', vv.5-7, p.137), the departure of the 'funicolare' in 'Il fiore che ripete' (v.9, p.148) and the 'muggio dei battelli a ruote' ('Lindau', v.8, p.115) were metaphors for the imprisonment of man as an automaton within the mechanical and unidirectional flow of time. Flight and the mechanical element were in fact opposite and irreconcilable metaphors: 'il tardo frullo / di un piccione incapace di seguirti / sui gradini automatici che ti slittano in giù...' ('Di un natale metropolitano', vv.10-12, p.224). In 'Il sogno del prigioniero' the two metaphors are still opposed to each other, but unnaturally re-united and recognizable in the same image, that of the 'zigzag degli storni sui battifredi / nei giorni di battaglia' (vv.2-3). Furthermore, the metaphor of flight loses its transcendent value and, in the third stanza, is dragged down towards the ground ('mi sono fuso / col volo della tarma che la mia suola / sfarina sull'impiantito', vv.19-21).

Meanwhile, the metaphor of imprisonment is enriched by the use of vocabulary and images belonging to the kitchen which are developed alongside those of 'il sogno'.¹⁵ It is the presence of new, varied and clashing realities within Montale's metaphors (which were highly symbolical and powerfully defined in his earlier poetry), the joining of the

solemn with the vulgar in his metaphors and vocabulary which suggests the opening up of Montale's language to a more heteroglossic style. Such a style can be seen to represent, in part, a reflection of the linguistic orchestration of society where the use of the solemn poetic vocabulary directly related to Montale's previous production ('mie sole ali', v.3; 'focolare', v.9; 'volo', v.20; 'iridi', v.27; 'sogno', v.34; lexemes which in their turn are connected to the Italian and European literary-biblical tradition), appears mixed in degrees with everyday and common language which belongs to the environment of prison and the kitchen: 'battifredi' (v.2), 'capoguardia...spioncino' (v.5), 'torrioni' (v.23), 'inferriate' (v.28), 'crac di noci' (v.6); 'oleoso / sfrigolio' (vv.6-7), 'girarrosti' (v.7), 'afferri il mestolo' (v.15), 'pâté' (v.16), 'bruciaticcio / dei buccellati' (vv.24-25). It is clear that Montale's poetic language adopted from *Ossi di seppia* up until *La bufera* has reached a final level of *saturation* and can no longer express on its own the abominable reality which surrounds the poet: the 'vene / di salnitro e di muffa' (vv.13-14, p.181) which were the sign of an incipient process of rotting in 'Notizie dall'Amiata' have, by the end of *La bufera*, invaded the whole existential and historical scenario described by Montale's poetry and along with it his poetic language too. Embracing common language becomes a possible way to replace what rot has destroyed.

In previous poems the spatio-temporal dimensions associated with the area beyond the here-and-now were connoted as part of a metaphysical existence outside reality, perhaps more real and positive than reality itself.¹⁶ In 'Il sogno del prigioniero' the space beyond the here-and-now, i.e. the space outside the prison, is connoted by more sinister images of a mediaeval kitchen. These images are not the 'sempreverde / alloro per la cucina /

resiste' (vv.54-56, p.126) of 'Dora Markus', where the bay-leaves were already a sign of resistance within the 'lago d'indifferenza' (vv.23-24, p.125) and the 'fede feroce' (v.58, p.126) of the pre-war times; or the 'arnesi da cucina / lillipuziani' (vv.28-29, p.120), the product of Gerti's imagination. They suggest a rather degraded kind of kitchen where the 'crac di noci schiacciate' (v.6) and 'i girarrosti / veri o supposti' (vv.7-8) can be very easily interpreted as farcical-grotesque references to human tortures, to Stalin's Purges which were taking place in those years, or to the horrors of Hitler's death-camps.¹⁷ The internal rhyme 'girarrosti-supposti' gives the line a darkly comical effect, underlining even more the grotesque element.

In line 8 a specific sign activates the second metaphorical dimension which runs parallel to that of the imprisonment, namely, that of dream: a long hyphen separates lines 2-8a from 8b-10, thus dividing the *endecasillabo* into a *quinario* and a *settenario*. In lines 8b-10 the reader witnesses a sudden return to the images of salvation which were offered by the evocation of Clizia-Iride in previous poems: 'la paglia è oro, / la lanterna vinosa è focolare / se dormendo mi credo ai tuoi piedi' (vv.8b-10).¹⁸ This is the prisoner's dream, the only dimension where the cold prison can turn into a place of intense personal authenticity and the frightful signs which connote the reality outside the prison can be forgotten. The long hyphen can be seen to correspond to one of the 'pochi segni' (v.1) if interpreted as a linguistic-formal sign which marks the difference between 'veglia' e 'sogno'.

Thus, the spatial co-ordinate 'qui' (v.1) which is opposed to a space beyond the prison wall-door-'spioncino' connoted as negative and grotesque, is now also opposed to the

dimension of dream. The binary opposition becomes a threefold one where reality is opposed to the dimension of nightmare (i.e. the space beyond the prison-door) as well as to that of dream. If the dream dimension is the safest of the three, the dimension of reality, the 'qui', translated into a mere waiting 'l'attesa è lunga' (v.33), assumes relatively positive connotations if compared to previous instances in Montale's poetry where 'qui' was the claustrophobic garden which imprisoned the poetic voice and the various addressees. An acceptance of the here-and-now-dimension becomes plausible, but the only real activity left to the prisoner is now that of waiting and dreaming, if trying to escape from the prison means 'abiurare e sottoscrivere' (v.12, my change), 'tradire / e vendere carne d'altri' (vv.14-15, my change), 'afferrare il mestolo' (v.15, my change) or else 'terminare nel *pâté* / destinato agl'Iddii pestilenziali' (vv.16-17): in other words, embracing the surrounding dimension of nightmare.¹⁹

The only way to escape from the metaphorical prison is through dream. The prison becomes the only possible space where existence is understood as a long wait before the inevitable choice must be made, but the prison also becomes a metaphor for the 'accidia' or the non-choice for which Montale can be seen to opt, not as a sign of cowardice but as a sign of spiritual and personal freedom if the choice is either to be 'farcitore' or 'farcito'.

Dreaming of Clizia introduces an element of hope within a reality of imprisonment and fear and, like all vivid dreams, blurs the boundaries of reality. The dimensions of dream and reality are clearly separated in the first two stanzas: in the first stanza the hyphen in line 8 signals explicitly the shift from reality to dream, while the break between the first and second stanzas marks the return to the very negative dimension of reality. In the third

stanza, however, they blend together to describe an existential situation where it is no longer possible to discriminate between what is dreamt and what is not. The prisoner in his physical and spiritual suffering, dreams of fusing (or confusing?) his existence with the flight of the moth, the insect which he stamps on his prison floor with his foot. His desperate growing one with a moth creates an image which is far from those of the previous winged angels and much closer to the Mosca-insect in *Satura*. However dwarfing a fusion with an insect can be, the moth can fly and that is enough to allow the jump from reality to dream, to confuse the light reflected on window spaces at dawn with 'kimoni cangianti' (v.22), to smell 'bucellati' (v.25) from the ovens (instead of smell of human flesh?), to conjure 'iridi su orizzonti di ragnateli / e petali sui tralicci delle inferriate' (vv.27-28). The leap to the dream dimension, however, is short and landing back in reality is inevitable.

The whole progress of the poem is summarized in the metaphor of the moth which leaps into flight only to be soon knocked to the floor and smeared to dust: the moral, psychological and linguistic curve of the of the text is the parabola. The metaphors deployed in the text create images which attempt flight, but inevitably fall back to the grotesque. The alternation of traditional and new vocabulary and images which refer to 'albe e notti' and to the theme of 'sogno' e 'veglia' are woven all though the text until the end and create a texture of highly heteroglossic *chiaroscuri*. If in the first and second stanzas the images connoting dream, nightmare and reality-prison are juxtaposed and still separated by formal signs, in the third stanza they are merged into a new style: the 'kimoni cangianti' (v.22) are associated to 'torrioni' (v.23), 'iridi' (v.27) are conjured on

'ragnateli' (v.27) and 'petali' (v.28) are watched growing on the prison bars. The new dimension of dream-prison-nightmare contains all images blended together as can only happen in dreams and even the metaphor of food 'il bruciaticcio / dei buccellati dai forni' (vv.24-25) appears in it mitigated, yet still retaining its sinister value included in the combination of the verb 'ho annusato' (v.24) and the noun 'bruciaticcio' (v.24).

The different metaphors and intonations in the third stanza are woven together to form a new style of poetry. Space remains the same, but time takes on an obsessive rhythm: no longer the beat of the 'tempo che ti batte al polso' of 'Carnevale di Gerti', the movement of the sundial of '*Fuscello teso dal muro...*', or one of the hellish dances so often used by the poet in previous poems, dances which had a real *tempo*, the various 'carioche', 'sardane', 'sarabande' and so forth. Time is measured by the 'zigzag degli storni sui battifredi' (v.2), by the sound of 'crac di noci schiacciate' (v.6), 'sfrigolio dalle cave' (v.7) and 'colpi che si ripetono ed i passi' (v.31). Such unusual, sinister visual and aural signals reaching the prisoner from the reality outside the prison-cell are the only parameters available to know that time has not stopped. However, it is impossible for the prisoner to measure whether the silence between such signals lasts a minute or a century. The concept of time is still functioning, but its boundaries are blurred (just like the boundaries between dream and reality) and existence becomes a wait. The image of loss of time boundaries is a recurring one and it is directly connected to the theme of dissolution of time. However, the confusion between century and minute is highly negative if the length of a minute in the prison resembles that of a century. It is no longer the image of 'eternità d'istante' ('La bufera', v.12, p.189) where the surrounding

apocalyptic-biblical style enhances the metaphysical value of the temporal image: 'il lampo che candisce / alberi e muri e li sorprende in quella / eternità d'istante — marmo manna / e distruzione' (vv.10-13, p.189). In 'Il sogno del prigioniero' the confusion of the temporal limitations has no connection with any upward or transcendent metaphysical movement in the poem. Quite the contrary. The confusion between century and minute is the result of a fall from a final attempt at metaphysical flight to the bottom of the prison: 'ho suscitato / iridi su orizzonti di ragnateli / e petali sui tralicci delle inferriate, / mi sono alzato, sono ricaduto / nel fondo dove il secolo è il minuto' (vv.26-30).

Coupled with the downward movement of the style and the images, it is possible to witness a general sliding by the poetic persona towards sloth, where a minute and a century mean the same, where nothing means anything any longer. 'L'attesa è lunga' (v.33) and the poetic persona's lethargy (it is almost possible to talk about 'ignavia' in this case) characterizes the closing lines of this poem: the prisoner is literally on the verge of Hell, but sloth as a final resort is still accompanied by hope ('il mio sogno di te non è finito', v.34). Being able and free to dream, detaching oneself from a frightful reality, is all that is left of 'una speranza che bruciò più lenta / di un duro ceppo nel focolare' ('Piccolo testamento', vv.11-12, p.267). Despite the extreme, inhuman condition depicted in the closing poem to *La bufera e altro*, there can be seen a final effort to hold on to a dream, to a possible awaited epiphany, if it is permissible to connect the closing line of 'Il sogno del prigioniero' with the closing lines of 'Piccolo testamento' where the signs are still recognized and read: 'Il tenue bagliore strofinato / laggiù non era quello di un fiammifero' (vv.29-30, p.267).

5.5 Conclusion

While most of Montale's poetry can, to some extent, be seen to present a tendency towards linguistic disaggregation, in 'Il sogno del prigioniero' the lowering of the intonation and the introduction of farcical-grotesque metaphors and images and of vocabulary belonging to fields other than traditional poetic language bring the Montalian text to a further degree of disintegration, not only linguistic but also moral and psychological. It is possible to say that the language adopted in this poem is heteroglossic to a higher degree than Montale's previous poetry: there is a constant tendency to drop completely to the grotesque level, but at the same time one cannot but feel the presence of a constant effort to preserve the old images which are the only hope left to the prisoner. It is the presence of these levels, the *chiaroscuro* of grotesque and hopeful that hold together the poem.

It has been seen that out of the two stylistic and thematic components within 'Il sogno del prigioniero' (the grotesque and the hopeful, reality and potential epiphanies) which oppose and attract each other in the first two stanzas, a new style is created in the third stanza which contains both vulgar and hopeful elements and which anticipates some of the later poetry from *Satura* onwards. 'Il sogno del prigioniero' represents the final stage of the first forty years of Montale's production and an anticipation of what will be the style of the 'secondo Montale'. It is a pivotal text around which Montale's poetic universe can be seen to revolve, and which shows us that the second season of poetry is solidly rooted in his past poetic experience: 'un testo-cerniera' which separates but also

holds together his production if we are to accept Montale's words 'ho scritto un solo libro' (Montale, 1975, *Sulla poesia*, 1976, p.601-06).

Notes

¹ For Bakhtin's pioneering analysis of the heteroglossic nature of language of the novel see some of the most significant of his writings: M. Bakhtin *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1973), *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays* (1981), *Rabelais and His World* (1984), *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (1986). For full references refer to Bibliography.

² The term heteroglossia refers to the presence of different levels of contextual significance attached to language which determine its dialogical nature. In this sense, language is the continually changing product of a whole society, nation and culture and it cannot be framed and crystallized as a unitary phenomenon of abstract categories. Heteroglossia (the Russian 'raznorechie' which means 'different-speech-ness') refers to the conflict between 'centrifugal' and 'centripetal', 'official' and 'unofficial' discourses within the same language. Bakhtin defines heteroglossia as the 'base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance. It is that which insures the primacy of context over text' (Bakhtin, 1981, pp.428).

³ M. Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays*, 1981, pp.259-420 (pp.285-86). References to this essay will appear from now after quotations in the abbreviated form of DIN and the relevant page number.

⁴ Bakhtin was writing in the years following the Russian Revolution and leading to the brutalities of Communism when the choice of silence was the only option for the Russian intelligentsia who opposed the regime. With 'artificial language' Bakhtin refers to the choice made by the Russian Symbolists and Futurists to use a poetic language which was essentially non-communicative (their way of skimming Silence) as opposed to prose writers who showed interest in the different dialects socially available. (See Bakhtin, DIN, pp.287-88.) Geyer-Ryan hypothesizes that the hardening of the language of poetry is directly dependent on the dynamics of the historical development of the concept of both poetry and the poet: 'When Bakhtin was writing, the novel had developed to make use of heteroglossia in the fullest sense [...]. It is possible that being a much more personal genre, poetry is only just beginning to universalize the strategies of 'low' and 'comic' sub-genres.' (See H. Geyer-Ryan, 1988, p.219.)

⁵ Silence as a form of 'expression', from the aesthetic point of view, can be traced back in the second half of the nineteenth century in Mallarmé's drama of the inexpressible, the blank page. In the nineteenth century however, the issue of silence acquires a more philosophical-political depth: consider Adorno's statement that after Auschwitz there could no longer be poetry, or Steiner's denunciation of modern writers' tendency to logorrhoea, whereby the authentic word finds it difficult to emerge amongst the worthless proliferation of language. Montale himself denounces contemporary literature as a market of products ('la poesia — come il romanzo, sebbene su scala

ridotta — sta diventando un prodotto industriale’) and, similarly to Steiner, underlines the contemporary *mal d’écrire* (see ‘La poesia consiste’, p.848). In an interview with Bruno Rossi in 1962, Montale declares that his reasons for eight years of poetic silence are many, amongst which also: ‘l’inflazione poetica che mi ha intimidito. Essendo presenti sul campo *migliaia* [my italics] di poeti nuovi pensavo che bisognasse cedere il proprio posto a loro. [...] Forse siamo in una stagione molto fortunata. O forse in una stagione infelice, in cui v’è un livello tecnico molto alto, ma al quale non corrisponde poi nulla di importante.’ See Adorno (1958, p.92), Steiner (1969, pp.75-76); Montale (1976, p.587); Montale (1976, p.593).

⁶ As Steiner explains, the term ‘logocentricity’ refers to the Neo-platonic and Johannine metaphor ‘In the beginning was the Word’, where the *Logos*, the essence of God, the act that creates, truth and total communication, has little in common with human speech, which creates too, but is fragmentary and represents a disintegration of the absolute *Logos*: the ruins of the Tower of Babel and the remains of the torn Orpheus, all results of the Gods’ anger towards ‘the miraculous outrage of human speech.’ But if man’s word is only a fragment of the totality of God’s Word, then silence can be construed as a step towards the totality of *Logos*. (Steiner 1969, pp.55-56) Montale raises the issue of the disintegration of the divine *Logos* in ‘La lingua di Dio’ where he refers to God as ‘il linguaggio, l’Uno che ne creò tanti altri’ (v.1, p.455) and to men as ‘fermi alla balbuzie’ (v.8, p.455).

⁷ I use the term ‘poetic unity’ in the same sense as Bakhtin does in DIN (p.285) where he explains: ‘in poetic genres, artistic consciousness — fully realizes itself within its own language’. In this sense, poetic unity refers to the complete attempt to own language by an author, to subdue language so that it can become ‘an obedient organ, fully adequate to the author’s intention’ (DIN, p.286).

⁸ ‘Piccolo testamento’ and ‘Il sogno del prigioniero’, the former written in 1953 and the latter in 1954, were placed as provisional conclusions at the end of Montale’s third book. Afterwards, the following 10 years are marked by a striking poetic silence from Montale, with the exception of the publication of the *plaque* in 1962 which contained the unpublished newly composed ‘Botta e risposta I’, ‘Ventaglio per S.F.’ and three other poems written in the 1920s (see Grignani, 1987, p.11). He resumes poetic activity in earnest in 1964 with the composition of the first ‘Xenia’ poems.

In an interview with Bruno Rossi in 1962, Montale states some of the reasons for the long silence between the publication of *La bufera* and the 1962 *plaque*: ‘Non c’è un solo motivo. Ci sono molti motivi. Prima di tutto ho avuto l’impressione che avendo già pubblicato tre libri, che sono in definitiva tre parti della stessa autobiografia, potevo anche tacere, perché avevo già detto tutto l’essenziale’ (Montale 1976, p.593). Montale in this interview prefers not to comment on other possible reasons which caused his poetic commitment to come to a natural pause for at least seven years. An important factor in his withdrawal from poetry-writing and his political (but not moral)

commitment is that of his disillusionment with the years following the Second World War, Resistance and the *Dopoguerra* which Montale hoped would re-instate pre-Fascist democratic and bourgeois-liberal values. See Montale (1960, *Sulla poesia*, p.579).

⁹ Consider, for example, 'Gli orecchini' where the images chosen 'si compongono in un tutto organico solo *a posteriori*. Radunare più oggetti che, presi ad uno ad uno, presentano un volto familiare (uno specchio, una spugna, delle pietre, coleotteri, e, più in là, meduse e mani), e ricavare dall'insieme un non so che di "ricco e di strano", come se insomma ci si rendesse conto per la prima volta che la realtà consiste in un aggregato di cose sprovvisto di qualsiasi giustificazione logica' (Avalle 1970, p.61). 'Keepsake', 'Il ramarro se scocca', 'La canna che dispiuma' (and in general most of the *Mottetti*), 'Finestra fiesolana', 'Botta e riposta I' are some other examples of texts where the syntax of images presents no spatial, temporal or logical connections. For further reference to illogical and disintegrative text construction in Montale see also Graziosi (1972b, pp.505-32).

¹⁰ The only sections which can be seen to still bear some characteristics of a unitary 'canzoniere' are Xenia I and II, where the figure of the dead Mosca still tries to act as a link between the poet and the absolute. However, the stature and the philosophical flights of Mosca are clearly insect-like if compared to the previous figures of Clizia and Iride.

¹¹ Barile has drawn a parallel study between Montale's and Beckett's plays. Despite the fact that Montale did not appreciate Beckett's theatre, his poetry during the years of *Satura* and later seems to have a similar response to reality. This is the way Barile introduces her studies on Beckett's influence on Montale: 'A Niklaus Gessner che gli chiedeva perché continuare a scrivere se il Nulla e il Vuoto e l'Incomunicabile erano i suoi temi, Beckett rispose: "Que voulez vous, Monsieur? C'est les mots, on n'a rien d'autre". La disintegrazione del linguaggio come possibilità di comunicazione è il punto in cui la via di Beckett incontra quella di Montale' (Barile 1990, pp.113-14).

¹² 'Il sogno è questo: un vasto, / interminato giorno che rifonde / tra gli argini, quasi immobile, il suo bagliore / e ad ogni svolta il buon lavoro dell'uomo, / il domani velato che non fa orrore. / E altro ancora era il sogno' ('Barche sulla Marna', vv.19-24, p.179); 'S'accese sui pomi cotogni, / un punto, una cocciniglia, / si udì inalberarsi alla striglia / il poney — e poi vinse il sogno' ('Nella serra', vv.5-8, p.249). In the notes to a special edition of Eugenio Montale's *Finisterre* (1945), the poet describes 'Iride' as dreamt poetry: 'È una poesia che ho sognato e trascritto; ne sono forse più il medium che l'autore' (see Montale, *L'opera in versi*, 1980, p.962).

¹³ Barile underlines a Plotinian influence on Montale's indication of the zone between 'veglia' and 'sonno' as the place where poetry is conceived: 'In tale stato di incoscienza-cosciente, opposto all'io cosciente dell'idealismo, può esprimersi quella

parte universale (il “tu”, l’Assoluto che è plotinianamente il nostro essere profondo) che è nell’individuo’ (Barile, 1990, pp.106-07).

¹⁴ Clizia’s flights start to be replaced by mechanical flights in texts earlier than ‘Il sogno del prigioniero’. Consider, for example, ‘Gli orecchini’ where the opening lines announce Clizia’s disappearance ‘Non serba ombra di voli il nerofumo / della spera. (E del tuo non è più traccia)’ (vv.1-2, p.194) and where, later, line 9 underlines the presence of a quite different kind of flight ‘Ronzano èlitre fuori’ (v.9, p.194). Montale explains in a letter to Silvio Guarnieri dated 29 November 1965 that ‘le èlitre sono gli aerei di guerra visti come funesti insetti’ (see Greco 1980, p.46). George Kay (1964, pp.115) translates ‘Il zigzag degli storni’ (v.2) in ‘Il sogno del prigioniero’ as ‘The zigzagging of formations’: this probably derives from the presence of the variant ‘stormi’ for ‘storni’ in the first two editions of the collection (1956 and 1957). It seems most likely, however, that this was a printing error, as the variant was not present on the original publication of the poem in *Il ponte* in 1954 (see *L’opera in versi*, 1980, p.971). It is interesting to note, however, that the image of starlings in formation returns later, in *Quaderno di quattro anni*: ‘Passano in formazioni romboidali / velocissimi altissimi gli storni / visti e scomparsi in un baleno / così fitti / che non c’è punto di luce / in quel rombo’ (‘Da un taccuino’, vv.1-6, p.557).

¹⁵ Images connected to ‘rotting food’ and ‘the kitchen’ start infiltrating into Montale’s poetry from *Occasioni* (‘Dora Markus’ and ‘Notizie dall’Amiata’) as will be seen in section 6.2 in the next chapter.

¹⁶ Examples of texts where a metaphysical dimension which is described as perhaps more authentic than reality are numerous as from *Ossi di seppia*, where in the opening poem ‘In limine’ the poetic voice explicitly introduces reality as ‘la rete / che ci stringe’ (vv.15-16, p.5) and urges the addressee to escape from the garden of life in search of a more positive dimension: ‘se procedi t’imbatti / tu forse nel fantasma che ti salva’ (vv.11-12, p.5) and ‘cerca una maglia rotta [...] tu balza fuori, fuggi!’ (vv.15-16, p.5). Other poems where reference is made to such a dimension are ‘I limoni’ (‘Quando un giorno da un malchiuso portone / tra gli alberi di una corte / ci si mostrano il gialli dei limoni’, vv.43-45, p.9), ‘Casa sul mare’ (‘Vorrei dirti che no, che ti s’appressa / l’ora che passerai di là dal tempo; / forse solo chi vuole s’infinita, / e questo tu potrai, chissà, non io. / Penso che per i più non sia salvezza, / ma taluno sovverta ogni disegno, / passi il varco, qual volle si ritrovi’, vv.20-26, p.91), ‘Arsenio’ (‘e se un gesto ti sfiora, una parola / ti cade accanto, quello è forse, Arsenio, / nell’ora che si scioglie, il cenno d’una / vita strozzata per te sorta’, vv.56-59, p.81), ‘Carnevale di Gerti’ (‘hai ritrovato / forse la strada che tentò un istante / il piombo fuso a mezzanotte quando / finì l’anno tranquillo senza spari’, vv.12-15, p.120).

¹⁷ Montale talked about a double interpretation of the prisoner in ‘Il sogno del prigioniero’: ‘il mio prigioniero può essere un prigioniero politico; ma può essere *anche*

prigioniero della condizione esistenziale. Ambiguità, *in questo caso*, necessaria alla poesia' (Montale, 1976, pp.579-80). Carpi, in keeping with Montale's comment, suggests that interpreting the image of Lucifer in 'Piccolo testamento' and that of the pestilential Gods in 'Il sogno del prigioniero' *sic et simpliciter* as respectively literary masks of communism and a Stalin-Moloch means simplifying the poetic richness of those texts. However, at the same time, it is necessary to keep in mind a double interpretation of those images without excluding totally and *a priori* the historical dimension from 'Conclusioni provvisorie': 'Ho cercato di mostrare come le più rilevate immagini delle *Conclusioni provvisorie* non siano gratuite e sia pur suggestive invenzioni di una fantasia eccitata, ma al contrario la coerente conclusione di una lunga e complessa esperienza storico-politica' (Carpi 1971, p.82).

¹⁸ Hyphens are used elsewhere in Montale's poetry, to separate two different realities formally within the poetic-linguistic context: 'S'accese sui pomi cotogni, / un punto, una cocciniglia, / si udì inalberarsi alla striglia / il poney — e poi vinse il sogno' ('Nella serra', vv.5-8, p.241); 'se si sfolla la strada e ti conduce / in un mondo soffiato entro una tremula / bolla d'aria e di luce dove il sole / saluta la tua grazia — hai ritrovato / forse la strada che tentò un istante / il piombo fuso a mezzanotte quando / finì l'anno tranquillo senza spari' ('Carnevale di Gerti', vv.9-15, p.120).

¹⁹ The 'gemiti d'ocche' (v.40, p.132) of 'Dora Markus' have now become 'questo sterminio d'ocche' (v.13) and the 'Iddio taurino' of 'Ballata scritta in una clinica' has turned into 'gl'Iddii pestilenziali' (v.17). The images have become much more marked in 'Il sogno del prigioniero' and the political-historical link has become more obvious.

Chapter Six: Heteroglossia and social satire in the 'secondo Montale':

'Botta e risposta I'

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I intend to continue analyzing the stylistic patterns which have been singled out during the discussion on the effects of heteroglossia in Montale's poetry. My search for the interweaving of styles and vocabulary which create the heteroglossic *chiaroscuro* in the second period of Montale's production will resume from the concluding considerations in Chapter Five, as the present chapter aims at developing the same themes.

First of all I shall pursue the development throughout Montale's first three books of a metaphor which unites three themes (smell, food-cooking and rot) and which comes to the fore towards the end of *La bufera e altro* and especially in 'Il sogno del prigioniero' and 'Botta e risposta I'. The examination of this metaphor will highlight some characteristics present in the heteroglossic language of Montale's second season of production and the slow introduction of social satire through such images within Montale's poetry. Although it is present from roughly *La bufera e altro*, social satire will also peak in the poetry from *Satura* onwards. Both these aspects introduce polyphony in Montale's poetry and contribute to disintegrate the poetic unity as has already been discussed in Chapter Five.

Secondly, I shall analyze 'Botta e risposta I' which is the first poetic text written by Montale in 1961 and published in the 1962 *plquette* which was the first embryo out of which *Satura* would be shaped as a book during the following 9 years. 'Botta e risposta I' being the first text written after eight years of poetic silence, can be seen to

represent the resurgence of Montale's inspiration and the re-flowering of his poetry which many years before had been symbolized by the image of a frail flower growing from and on perilous land in the epigraph to the 'Mottetti' (the quotation from G. A. Becquer: 'sobre el volcán la flor', p.137) and in 'Giunge a volte, repente' ('Questo pezzo di suolo non erbato / s'è spaccato perché nascesse una margherita', vv.20-21, p.57). However, in examining 'Botta e risposta I', it will become evident that Montale's poetry from *Satura* onwards is a totally different type of flower from that of 'Mediterraneo' and 'Mottetti'. As was stressed in the analysis of 'Il sogno del prigioniero', the heteroglossic plaiting of two styles, the hopeful and the vulgar, do create a linguistic texture which splits the stylistic unity, but, at the same time, holds together the poem thanks to a newly reached balance between such extraneous styles. On the other hand, although 'Botta e risposta I' is united by the same poetic-narrating voice, it splits into two separate styles altogether and even two separate poems.¹ In this way 'Botta e risposta I' can be seen to represent one of the first poetic 'rottame' ('Ho sostato talvolta nelle grotte', v.22, p.56) of Montale's second season of production.

6.2 Smell, food and bodily waste, the threads of a metaphor: from 'Un sentore di meloni' to 'Un'infilzata fetida / di saltimbocca'

The purpose of this section is to investigate the origins and the developments of a metaphor which appears for the first time at the close of *La bufera e altro* in 'Il sogno del prigioniero' and then more clearly in 'Botta e risposta I'. The metaphor is that exemplified partly by 'il bruciatuccio dei buccellati dai forni' in 'Il sogno del prigioniero' (vv.24-25, p.276) and, more clearly, by 'stracolmi imbuti, / forconi e

spiedi, un'infilzata fetida / di saltimbocca' in 'Botta e risposta I' (vv.12-14, p.285), that is by the combination of themes which are present within Montale's poetry: on the one hand that of food, clearly connected with the sense of smell and, later, the field of cookery and the kitchen; and, on the other hand, that of rot and human waste. The main search will be more specifically that of tracing down the infiltration of lexicon and images connected to 'rot' into the theme of food and cookery and its consequent deterioration to bodily waste.

The first images connected to the perception of smell can be traced back in *Ossi di seppia*. In 'I limoni' the poetic voice refers to the fragrance of the lemon-trees as to a familiar smell which is connected to the 'orto' or garden of life, the centre of Montale's poetic landscape: 'più chiaro si ascolta il susurro / dei rami amici nell'aria che quasi non si muove / e i sensi di quest'odore / che non sa staccarsi da terra / e piove in petto una dolcezza inquieta' (vv.13-17, p.11). I have referred to the symbolic meaning of the garden before in this study as the space-prison from which escape is constantly sought but also as the space of Montale's private affections and memories, the space which offers shelter and security: the scent of the lemon trees in 'I limoni' is described as part of his private Ligurian memories ('qui tocca anche a noi poveri la nostra parte di ricchezza / ed è l'odore dei limoni', vv.20-21, p.11). The image created by the smell of the lemon-trees is that of sweetness, which is connected somehow to the illusion of seeing a sign of a potential salvation:

Lo sguardo fruga d'intorno,
la mente indaga accorda disunisce
nel profumo che dilaga
quando il giorno più languisce.
Sono i silenzi in cui si vede
in ogni ombra umana che si allontana

qualche disturbata Divinità.
(vv.32-35, p.12)

The image of sweetness at the opening of *Ossi di seppia* is however turned into its contrary in later texts: in 'Vento e bandiere' ('La folata che alzò l'amaro aroma / del mare alle spirali delle valli', vv.1-2, p.25) and in 'Mia vita a te non chiedo lineamenti' ('Nel tuo giro inquieto ormai lo stesso / sapore han miele e assenzio', vv.3-4, p.33). The image of sweet smell is also found in *Le occasioni* in 'Notizie dall'Amiata' to which I will return later. For the moment I shall linger a little longer on *Ossi di seppia* so as to track down the first mentions of images of cooking.

As from 'In limine' the idea of 'boiling' is evoked by the image of the melting pot: 'Il frullo che tu senti non è un volo, / ma il commuoversi dell'eterno grembo; / vedi che si trasforma questo lembo / di terra solitario in un crogiuolo' (vv.6-9, p.5). The idea of 'boiling' and 'cooking' is suggested also in 'Avrei voluto sentirmi scabro ed essenziale' ('il bollore della vita fugace', vv.7-8, p.59); in 'Fine dell'infanzia' ('sul torbato mare / che ci bolliva in faccia', vv.91-92, p.69); in 'L'agave su lo scoglio, Tramontana' ('quel friggere vasto della materia / che discolora e muore', vv.3-4, p.72); and early in *Occasioni*, in 'Keepsake' a reference is made to the frying-like noise of a spotlight: 'frigge un riflettore' (v.2, p.118). 'Il commuoversi dell'eterno grembo' (v.7), what Fabris has called 'lacrima ctonia' (1984, p.103), or the breaking through the surface of fluid matter, and the other examples of boiling or frying elements, already contain a component of the theme of cooking which comes to the fore in later years.

In 'Dora Markus' a first reference is made to 'gemiti d'ocche' (v.40, p.131) which will return in 'Il sogno del prigioniero' as part of the metaphor of the degenerated

kitchen where the 'gemiti' become a worrying 'sterminio d'ocche' (v.13, p.276) destined to produce 'pâté' (v.16, p.131). In *Occasioni* the metaphor of the kitchen becomes clearer: consider also 'l'alloro della cucina', of 'Dora Markus' (v.55, p.132) and two other poems 'Verso Vienna' and 'Notizie dall'Amiata': the former only to note two terms which belong to the vocabulary of the kitchen ('biscotto' and 'zenzero', v.2 and v.5, p.123), the latter due to the presence of some images which anticipate more complex themes. In the description of the poet's room, 'la cellula di miele / di una sfera lanciata nello spazio' (vv.10-11, p.190) one of the details is that of the 'travature / tarlate' (vv.3-4, p.190) and the 'sentore di meloni' (v.4, p.190). The images of the honey-cell and the melon odour could be easily interpreted as images of sweetness, if the image of the worm-eaten beams and, later, that of the breaking pile of straw ('Si disfà un cumulo di strame', vv.53-54, p.192, where 'disfà' contains also the sense of decaying) were not there to force the reader to re-interpret the previous images. The over-sweet smell of melons is, in fact, that of rotting melons, which together with the 'vene di salnitro e di muffa' (vv.13-14, p.190) become the main images of the first part of this poem. The fireplace, the site of a possible epiphany, if epiphany is connected to images of light and fire, loses its absolute value and is turned into a 'chestnut roaster': 'il focolare / dove i marroni esplodono' (v.12-13, p.190). The fireplace previously had been identified as the image of home, a sacred place of intense personal authenticity, thus it can be assumed that the feeling of familiarity which the fireplace symbolizes, is similar to the feeling which the memory of the scent of lemon-trees evoked in 'I limoni'.²

To the two threads of the metaphor which have been followed (that of scent-smell and that of food and the kitchen-fireplace) a third thread must be added: that of rot,

which has already been mentioned in 'Notizie dall'Amiata'. In 'Fine dell'infanzia' the Montalian poetic voice describes his childhood in connection with the Ligurian landscape, the same landscape described in 'I limoni' where the scent of the lemon-trees had been recognized as 'la nostra parte di ricchezza' (v.20, p.11). The Ligurian landscape is described as dry and refractory, the typical Mediterranean land: 'Tra macchie di vigneti e di pinete, / petraie si scorgevano / calve e gibbosi dorsi di collinette: un uomo / che la passasse ritto s'un muletto / nell'azzurro lavato era stampato / per sempre — e nel ricordo' (vv.29-35, p.68). However, behind this dryness, Montale describes a secretive part of this land: 'So che strade correvano su fossi / incassati, tra garbugli di spini; / mettevano a radure, poi tra botri, e ancora dilungavano / verso recessi madidi di muffe, / d'ombre coperti e di silenzi' (vv.39-44, p.68). The choice of describing mushrooms as rot in 'recessi madidi di muffe' create an underground vein of rot which is hidden behind the surface of the Ligurian landscape (which metaphorically is his 'paesaggio universale') and attacks it from underneath: the image is very similar to that of 'le vene di salnitro e di muffa' which has already been pointed out in 'Notizie dall'Amiata'. It is as if Montale at the end of his childhood had already understood that something was rotting beneath reality and certainly some short stories from *La farfalla di Dinard* document the thoughts, fears and disillusionment of a very perceptive adolescent. An underground destroying force is clearly present through the poetry of *Occasioni*: in 'Al primo chiaro, quando' Montale refers to 'il bulino che tarla / la scrivania' (vv.9-10, p.153) and in 'Stanze' Clizia is described as 'viva in un putre / padule d'astro inabbissato' (vv.6-7, p.169). By the end of *Occasioni* rot starts becoming evident by appearing on the surface in 'Notizie dall'Amiata' where it is clear that all is decaying: 'La stanza ha travature /

tarlate ed un sentore di meloni / penetra dall'assito' (vv.3-5, p.190); 'una valle d'elfi e di funghi' (vv.6-7, p.190), i.e. 'muffe'; 'le vene / di salnitro e di muffa' (vv.13-14, p.190); 'si disfà / un cumulo di strame' (vv.53-54, p.190). Clizia, the woman-angel whose pledge of love and sign of salvation are sought throughout Montale's second collection, whose epiphany is constantly awaited by the poetic voice, will have to appear or perhaps can only appear among the rot and the desecrated fireplace-chestnut-roaster: in this sense in 'Notizie dall'Amiata' the sacred and the profane are brought to the same level. The three threads of the metaphor under investigation in this section — smell, food-kitchen and rot — come together for the first time and start interweaving at the close of *Occasioni*. It is, thus, possible to claim that the poem concluding *Occasioni* shows clear signs of an incipient disintegration of Montale's poetic universe, which will peak in the poetry of the second period, i.e. from *Satura* onwards. Such signs of disintegration do become more evident in *La bufera e altro*. Throughout the third book, images of the kitchen and of rot acquire new characteristics: further desecration of the kitchen occurs and rot turns into bodily waste. Such images become quite regular and alternate each other in a *crescendo* of intonation towards their climax, 'Il sogno del prigioniero' and 'Botta e risposta I'.

A first scene of an ominous kitchen is found in 'L'arca' where the presence of a boiling pan is, at first sight, welcoming, reminiscent of the lost familiar affections to whom this poem is dedicated. The familiar and reassuring feeling given by such an image is very soon annihilated by the description of what is seen in its reflection: 'Fuma il ramaiolo / in cucina, un suo tondo di riflessi / accentra i volti ossuti' (vv.15-17, p.208). More images of food and kitchens are to be found in other poems in *La bufera e altro* which are accompanied by descriptions of rot and violence. In 'Ezekiel

saw the wheel...' the theme of food is used in the description of the Cross which, just like the ceiling beams in 'Notizie dall'Amiata', is rotting: 'la fibra della tua croce / in polpa marcita di vecchie / putrelle schiantate' (vv.22-24, p.255). In 'La primavera hitleriana', 'il beccaio che infiorava / di bacche il muso dei capretti uccisi' (vv.14-15, p.256), as George Talbot (1998, p.113) explains, the 'butcher continues the imagery of blood-letting' as is explained later in the same poem by the mention to 'la sagra dei miti carnefici che ancora ignorano il sangue' (v.16, p.256), symbolizing the human carnage of the imminent Second World War. The mention of food ('capretto') and blood, is followed by the image of violence and rot 's'è tramutata in un sozzo trescone d'ali schiantate, / di larve sulle golene' (vv.17,18, p.256).

Rot turns soon into waste and the characteristic of descriptions is that of a strong smell which infects the most sacred images which in *La bufera e altro* are still imbued with a most powerful symbolic significance.³ The theme of waste, however, is only marginal in Montale's third book, though it is developed fully in the poetry of the 'secondo Montale'. As will be seen in section 6.4 of this chapter, in 'Botta e risposta I' the theme of rot, turned into bodily waste, is openly combined with that of food and smell. The slow penetration of bodily waste into reality, and its combination with rotten food and stench in Montale's poetry coincides with possibly the climax of his satire on the existential-historical years following the Second World War, and on a reality where noble and vulgar are no longer distinguishable, a reality which is flattened to 'déconfiture', that is a general crisis, and then, with a touch of sarcasm and a comical play on the word 'confiture', to 'crème caramel / uscita dallo stampo [che] non *sta* in piedi' (vv.1-2, p.322, my change).

6.3 Satire and polyphony in the 'secondo Montale'

The development of the metaphor which includes images of stench, rotting food and bodily waste coincides with the introduction of social and political satire into Montale's poetry, close to what George Talbot refers to as 'conscious irony' (1998, p.113). Also the levelling of the whole society into shapeless 'crème caramel' can be seen, in a sense, to correspond to the merging, at the same level and into one language, of lexemes which are in turn sacred and profane, solemn and vulgar. I have already claimed that 'La primavera hitleriana', 'Il sogno del prigioniero' and 'Botta e risposta I' can be considered the climax of Montale's heteroglossic language in *La bufera e altro*, and the beginning of the most poignant social and political satire which follows later in the years of *Satura*.

The introduction of satire and heteroglossia or polyphony, that is of the language of the marketplace, into the official language (in this case the poetic language of the Italian and European Tradition) has been identified by Bakhtin (1973,1984) as a characteristic of some of the Mediaeval and Renaissance literature (eg. Dante, Boccaccio, Rabelais, Cervantes, Shakespeare). Furthermore, Bakhtin claims that references to the grotesque human body in which all organs are treated equally and, thus, where the act of eating (corresponding to the traditionally 'nobler' human parts such as the head and the upper body) and the act of urinating and defecating (corresponding to the lower body organs, such as the bowels, the anus and the genitalia) become the two different faces of the same celebration or invective of reality. Bakhtin saw in these aspects of grotesque-imagery in literature a clear reference to Carnival and the Roman Saturnalia, where class distinctions were forgotten for a few days, where all was allowed, where the serious aspects of society,

celebrations of victories, deaths and divinities were derided and turned into merriment and laughter; where, in few words the official aspects of reality were transferred to the non-official level.

Although Montale does not seem to refer much to the human body and to its protruberances, and his poetry does not include the Carnival type of laughter, it contains themes which include images of food, smell and rot which are turned slowly into degraded and grotesque images of rotting food, stench and bodily waste. It has been recognized that this coincides with the beginning of the Montalian historical, political and social satire which peaks from *Satura* onwards and which certainly includes a debasement of every aspect of reality into a contained faecal poetry and a subtle ironical smile at reality in its negativity and at himself.

An analysis of 'Botta e risposta I', in the first instance, and of a few other texts will highlight how the introduction and use of polyphony and satire in Montale's poetry cause disaggregation within the already discussed unitary project of his poetry. Montale, rather than looking for a salvation from history and reality, debases reality in all its aspects, and slowly contradicts, or shows a new face of all previous poetic affirmations. It is in this sense that it is possible to say that the poetic voice in the second period of poetry accepts the spatio-temporal-historical 'rete che ci stringe' and its limitations as the only possible reality, with detachment, disillusionment and poignancy, but perhaps also with a new sense of illuminated wisdom. However, in commenting on such a reality he cannot but adopt satire and sharp irony towards everything, including himself: all in all, at the end of his poetic journey he remains a *maladjusté* who cannot and does not want to conform to a reality and society which have turned into 'paniccia' ('A un gesuita moderno', v.4, p.328), but which is,

nevertheless, the only available to man.

6.4 'Botta e risposta I'

I

'Arsenio' (lei mi scrive), 'io qui "asolante"
tra i miei tetri cipressi penso che
sia ora di sospendere la tanto
da te per me voluta sospensione
d'ogni inganno mondano; che sia tempo 5
di spiegare le vele e di sospendere
l'*epoché*.

Non dire che la stagione è nera ed anche le tortore
con le tremule ali sono volate al sud.
Vivere di memorie non posso più. 10
Meglio il morso del ghiaccio che il tuo torpore
di sonnambulo, o tardi risvegliato'.

(lettera da Asolo)

II

Uscito appena dall'adolescenza
per metà della vita fui gettato
nelle stalle d'Augia.

Non vi trovai duemila bovi, né
mai vi scorsi animali; 5
pure nei corridoi, sempre più folti
di letame, si camminava male
e il respiro mancava; ma vi crescevano
di giorno in giorno i muggiti umani.

Lui non fu mai veduto. 10
La geldra però lo attendeva
per il presentat-arm: stracolmi imbuti,
forconi e spiedi, un'infilzata fetida
di saltimbocca. Eppure
non una volta Lui sparse 15
cocca di manto o punta di corona
oltre i bastioni d'ebano, fecali.

'Risposta', as the narrating and main poetic voice. However, the main narrating voice in both parts of the text is, in fact, that which can be conflated into the poet's voice, as the comment in brackets '(lei mi scrive)' (v.1, p.284) comes after the vocative 'Arsenio' (v.1, p.284) and clarifies that 'Botta' is being reported by the main narrator as a letter he received from Clizia: a letter which appears totally within inverted commas.⁴ Clizia's voice, in this way, results as the second voice and Arsenio's voice as the first and primary as it has both the role of participant in the act of communication (as the writer of the 'Risposta') and of narrator throughout the whole of 'Botta e risposta I'. Although 'Botta e risposta I' must still be considered as a text formed by two poems which mobilize two poetic voices, both parts are united and subordinated to the same narrator's voice. Even if the two poems are united by a common narrating voice, stylistically they present totally different kind of vocabulary and metaphors, therefore, 'Risposta' is not 'so much an answer as a free-standing meditation, provoked by the 'Botta' but not logically dependent on it' (Ó Ceallacháin, 1998, p.147). As was noted in the analysis of 'Il sogno del prigioniero', two separate stylistic threads are present in 'Botta e risposta I': the more solemn type of poetry in 'Botta' and the vulgar degenerate combination of metaphors which include vocabulary of the kitchen, rotting food and defecation in 'Risposta'.

'Botta' is followed by a note in brackets '(lettera da Asolo)', where 'Asolo' connotes the poem as belonging to the Italian and European poetic tradition, and 'letter' ascribes the text to the letter-writing *genre*, a communication means so dear within the tradition of poetry writing.⁵ The letter is fictionally written by Clizia, whilst 'on holiday' ('"asolante"') in Asolo, to Arsenio. Clizia within the Montalian system has always been the symbol of the woman who could go beyond the spatio-

temporal and historical illusory screen of reality and take some kind of metaphysical sign of possible knowledge back to the poet. Clizia, later Iride, was the only possible way to salvation, the means to reach the absolute, if not in a religious sense, at least in a secular one. On the other hand, Arsenio, alongside another few of Montale's characters such as Gerti and Volpe, represents the man who cannot or does not want to fly, who is eternally bound to reality as a 'giunco [...] che le radici / con sé trascina, viscide, non mai svelte' ('Arsenio', vv.47-49, p.84). If Clizia is 'quella che scorporò l'interno fuoco' ('Voce giunta con le folaghe', v.24, p.258) and the Christ-like saviour who pays for all ('tu che il non mutato amor mutata serbi, / fino a che il cieco sole che in te porti / si abbàcini nell'Altro e si ditrugga / in Lui, per tutti', 'La primavera hitleriana', vv.34-38, p.257), Arsenio is 'anello d'una / catena, immoto andare, oh troppo noto delirio [...] d'immobilità' ('Arsenio', vv.21-23, p.83).

In 'Botta' Clizia is suddenly seen as a woman who has ceased for a period to act as the woman endowed with powers of salvation: she has been 'asolante', inactive amongst her 'tetri cipressi', she has been Arsenio-like. However, we do not witness an inactive Clizia, rather a Clizia who decides to write to Arsenio to tell him to snap out of his lethargy ('Penso che sia tempo / di spiegare le vele e di sospendere / l'*epoché*', vv.5-7, p.284). 'Epoché' is a philosophical term which means precisely 'the state of suspension of judgement', a state of mind which is necessary to reach ataraxy, i.e. stoical indifference or imperturbability. 'Spiegare le vele' (I, v.6) can be interpreted as the re-activation of somebody's thought and, in fact, judgement.⁶ Clizia's letter is trying to shake up an inactivity which has lasted too long. If the equation is Clizia-Poetry, it is poetry itself which is asking to be revived after years of non-production. 'Botta', in a way, represents the attempt to resurgence of a dead

inspiration, a fight against sloth which has been Arsenio's attribute as far back as in *Ossi di seppia* and was completely defying the poetic voice in 'Il sogno del prigioniero'. The resurrection of poetry is attempted in a linguistic and stylistic context which is typical of Montale's poetry, with images and vocabulary which, as has been noted, are totally harmonious with traditional Italian poetry. Clizia's use of a metaphor which is inscribed within the Italian tradition reveals her intention of resurrecting a poetry which may perhaps re-establish Montale's poetic voice, as it was before the ten-year silence, into the same traditional poetic code whose father is identified as Dante. However, Montale shows that that is no longer possible: the traditional code must be broken and his voice and poetry may only resurrect as new, perhaps as even opposed to his previous poetic experience. This is clarified by 'Risposta' and by the poetry from *Satura* onwards.

Arsenio, referred to in the last line of 'Botta' by the epithet 'o tardi risvegliato' (I, v.12), replies to Clizia in the second part of the text: 'Risposta'. If in the first poem of the text the reader is confronted with a language that has been recognized as philosophical and poetic in the traditional sense, i.e. containing references to poets to whom Montale felt himself to be a disciple, the second poem definitely proposes a language similar to that recognized as vulgar in the analysis of 'Il sogno del prigioniero'. However, there the language was making use of images of the grotesque kitchen in a stylistic and linguistic texture which allowed a poetic juxtaposition, unexpected and surprising at first, and later a coexistence with other images which were characterized by a more solemn language. In 'Botta e risposta I' solemn language and vulgar imagery are neatly separated between 'Botta' and 'Risposta'.

linguistic difference between 'Botta' and 'Risposta', between Clizia and Arsenio, metaphorically, perhaps, between Montale's first and second seasons of poetic production. To a letter written in a high style by an elegant, quite extravagant woman who is having a 'pleasant' time in Asolo, the main poetic and narrating voice decides to reply in a vulgar and perhaps offensive language. It is a conscious decision to cut any connections with her, with his past and choose loneliness as an answer to his disillusionment with the spatio-temporal but also historical-political reality.⁸ It is this interweaving of different levels of voice and registers of language which create the heteroglossic *chiaroscuro* in the whole of 'Botta e risposta I'.

Spatially, in 'Botta' the co-ordinates are those of Asolo marked by the spatial adverb 'qui' and the adjective 'asolante' ('io qui 'asolante', I, v.1, with the literary-philosophical connotations which it carries), whilst in 'Risposta' the poetic voice is fictionally placed in a stable 'le stalle d'Augia' (II, v.3). Temporally, Clizia is speaking in the present, thus coding time and content time are identical as is often the case in epistolary communication, whilst Arsenio is referring to a temporal situation which includes past and present ('la mia prigionia e il mio dopo', II, v.47) thus the concept of time differs for each of the speaking voices. Clizia is living a temporal situation charged with a literary-philosophical meaning, lethargic and frustrating perhaps and tied to memories, but nevertheless mundane to a certain extent: she is on holiday (or in exile?) in Asolo in contact with an upper class society. Arsenio, on the other hand, has been experiencing difficult existential-historical years during which he felt he had been obliged to dwell in the Augean stables ('per metà della vita fui gettato / nelle stalle d'Augia', II, vv.2-3) without a possibility of decision. Being constrained to an existence for half of his life within a stable means to have to live

with animals or in animal-like conditions and, certainly, Arsenio's linguistic choice reflects this. It is indeed at this point, after the spatio-temporal co-ordinates of 'Risposta' have been clarified, that the metaphor of bodily waste is introduced. The vocabulary which follows includes terms connected to the stable: 'bovi' (II, v.4), 'animali' (II, v.5), 'letame' (II, v.7) and 'muggiti' (II, v.9). The noun 'muggiti' is completed by the adjective 'umani' (II, v.9) which underlines Arsenio's suffering and the impossibility of communicating with humans if the only sound witnessing a human presence is summarized by the oxymoron referring to human bellows and by the presence of excrement of human origins. Arsenio is alone in a reality of stench ('il respiro mancava', v.8) and human 'formiconi' with whom communication is impossible.

In the imagery of 'Risposta' humanity is, thus, demoted to animality, what should be noble is turned into base and vulgar: the theme of 'bodily waste' which was previously contained within underground secretive channels ('topi di chiavica' in 'Madrigali fiorentini', or 'navigando nelle chiaviche' in 'Vento sulla mezzaluna') and was already starting to leak into and infect the outside world, comes now to the fore and invades reality. This creates a re-union of the upper and the nether worlds, of human and animal-like, of higher and lower orders of life. But not only so, 'Botta e risposta I' entails a downward fall of what should be divine and sacred to the lowest level of organic life, that is bodily waste. A divine entity mentioned in this text is denoted by the capital letter person pronoun 'Lui'. The divinity is described as an absentee, just like Clizia was in *Mottetti* except that she was associated with positive, almost sacred signs of light; the divine entity in 'Botta e risposta I', on the other hand, is associated with cowardice[...]. Eppure / non una volta Lui sporse / cocca di

manto o punta di corona / oltre i bastioni d'ebano, fecali' (vv.10-17, p.285). Previously, the figure of the absent-present Clizia and the divinity were directly connected, especially in those poems of *La bufera e altro* in which Clizia had become the 'Cristofora' who was mediator between the poetic voice (and ultimately the rest of humanity) and the divine entity. 'Botta e risposta I' is the first text in which Clizia is explicitly described as 'asolante' and therefore inactive, and the divine as absent. It is perhaps the case that as the mediator between man and God is not there, then God does not appear or cannot be found. As Éanna Ó Ceallacháin has explained in a recent essay, from Xenia and, at large, from *Satura* the 'multi-dimensional relationship between the three poles io-tu-l'Altro' (1998, p.139) changes slowly into an unmediated search for a missing God, and 'the notion of "mancanza", of an absence of positive, authentic values, is [...], expressed through the use of what one might call theological discourse rather than the discourse of religious mysticism and love' (1998, p.140). In short, the figure of Clizia has become redundant, if the relationship between the poetic voice and the missing God is now direct. Hence, the impossibility to establish communication between the 'io' and the woman.

The metaphorical non-communication is linguistically supported by the encounter of two clashing languages, as has already been pointed out, in 'Botta' and 'Risposta'. To the literary-philosophical language employed by Clizia, Montale replies through images of bodily waste, stench and rotting food:

La geldra però lo attendeva
per il presentat-arm: stracolmi imbuti,
forconi e spiedi, un'infilzata fetida
di saltimbocca. Eppure
non una volta Lui sporse
cocca di manto o punta di corona

oltre i bastioni d'ebano, fecali.
(II, vv.10-17)

The clash between the two languages adopted by the two poetic voices is not only underlined by literary language set against the stable register, but also by modern high class Italian versus a language which employs terms which are connected to Mediaeval army and warfare language. 'Geldra' (v.11), 'bastioni' (v.17), 'bargelli del brago' (v.31) and 'presentat-arm' (v.12) which is a term belonging to the modern Italian army register. To put it simply, 'Botta e risposta I' in its entirety shows different social languages which are juxtaposed by Montale in order to metaphorically signify lack of communication between the poetic voice and Clizia. This may have mainly a metaphorical value in Montale's poetry, but it cannot be overlooked that stylistically and linguistically this poem proposes heteroglossia as a technique to convey non-communication between the two voices, and also to underline the presence of social polyphony.

Next to the literary-philosophical language used by Clizia, to the divine presence which should presuppose a high, solemn language, and to the faecal character of Arsenio's language, the army's register is mixed with the stable's register not only synchronically but also diachronically. The army of the Lord is described as 'la geldra' (from the Old Provençal 'gelde' which meant troop)⁹ which substitutes grotesque mercenary troops armed with 'pitch-forks' (see Kay's translation, Appendix I, p.291) and spits for the Apocalyptic imagery present in *La bufera e altro* and along with it unofficial register for poetic traditional discourse.

If all of this is re-inserted into the historical picture of the years during the Italian Fascism and Second World War, it may be possible to recognize Mussolini behind

the third-person pronoun 'Lui', the Italian people who believed in Fascism and were glad to go and fight a grotesque war, the high intellectual society who stood by and watched without getting involved or by taking a rather supine opposition to Fascism and the War atrocities. In this sense, in 'Botta e risposta' behind linguistic polyphony it is possible to envisage a sharp social satire addressed not only to those who were responsible for such atrocities, but to everyone, also to those who did not oppose the Regime enough, because as it is denounced in 'La primavera hitleriana' 'più nessuno è incolpevole' (v.19, p.256).¹⁰

The profanation of the most sacred images (linked to both Clizia and the divinity) in 'Botta e risposta I' denounces a reality which has lost spiritual and historical meaning and which turns into 'palta' (II, v.37) where men are no longer men but 'formiconi' (II, v.43), where communication and action are no longer possible, but instead life becomes mechanical, connected to animal instincts, and where the poetic voice's solitude becomes the only reality available. 'Risposta' closes on a general depiction of reality as degraded to bodily waste:

Che senso aveva quella nuova
palta? e il respirare altre ed eguali
zaffate? e il vorticare sopra zattere
di sterco? ed era sole quella sudicia
esca di scolaticcio sui fumaioli,
erano uomini forse,
veri uomini vivi
i formiconi degli approdi?
(vv.36-43, p.286)

It is not just society and what is connected with man which have turned to 'palta', but also the physical natural world that is perceived as infected by animal waste, where even the sun becomes 'sewer-grub' (see Kay's translation, Appendix I, p.292) and

the breeze turns into stench. Reality stinks from top to bottom, and Arsenio's reply to Clizia's letter seems at first illogical, but what is there left that is logical in the post-war society, in the years of the cold war?¹¹

A reprise of the unsuccessful epistolary relationship between Clizia and Arsenio is attempted again in the last six lines, although it could be claimed that the various questions raised during the narration of 'Risposta' are interpretable as syntactic deictics and, thus, should function as signs of an active relationship between letter writer and addressee. However, as it becomes clear at the very end of 'Risposta', the Clizia-Arsenio relationship is not at all active as Arsenio suspects that Clizia has stopped reading his reply 'Penso / che forse non mi leggi più' (II, vv.44-45). At this point, 'Risposta' loses its invective power and becomes more intimate, Arsenio from provocative becomes self-conscious, almost apologetic when he explains his reasons for giving up hope in 'Risposta', for offending Clizia by reacting so strongly to her letter, for pushing her away from him by not specifically answering her requests. In this way Arsenio remains more lonely than ever, having lost the only mediator between him and the divinity, and also by realizing that the divinity is, anyhow, either cowardly hiding away or not interested in reality. The poetic voice of 'Risposta' remains alone both deictically, if he chooses not to conform to the epistolary act of communication by replying coherently, and from the socio-linguistic point of view for adopting a different available social language which is charged with imagery of faecality and mediaeval grotesqueness in answer to a philosophical language.

6.5 Conclusion

The 'stercale' style in 'Risposta' metaphorically denounces the ideological disillusionment deriving from the Italian socio-political situation during the years following the Second World War, years which were meant to give the post-war Italian society a shake from the horrors of the war and from the provincialism and the spiritual and intellectual stagnation which twenty years of Fascism had brought on Italy. Montale's poetry during the years preceding the Second World War had charged itself with images whose significance pointed at the imminent dangers which would result from the outbreak of irrational forces which were an already evident sub-product of the existing nationalistic political atmosphere in Italy. In this light, images such as 'gemiti d'ocche' ('Dora Markus', v.40, p.131), 'distilla / veleno una fede feroce' ('Dora Markus', vv.57-58, p.132), 'una tregenda / d'uomini' ('Nuove stanze', vv.13-14, p.184), 'lo specchio ustorio / che accieca le pedine' ('Nuove stanze', vv.30-31, p.185), 'ultimi annunci / quest'odore di raggia e di tempesta / imminente' ('Palio', vv.11-13, p.187) can be understood as signals of his fears. Later, during the war, the collection of poems *La bufera* contained images which denounced the sinister atmosphere emanating from uncontrolled outbreak of violence of the war and the frantic conditions of man. War is present everywhere with its connotations of fury and chaos: 'Punge il suono d'una / giga crudele, l'avversario chiude / la celata sul viso' ('Nel sonno', vv.9-11, p.200), 'Ronzano èltre fuori, ronzano il folle / mortorio' ('Gli orecchini', vv.9-10, p.202). Men are really 'nati-morti' ('La frangia dei capelli', v.10, p.203) but flashes of light are possible signs of salvation from 'la calanca vertiginosa' ('Il ventaglio', vv.9-10, p.206) if faith and rationality are kept as a measure of escape or survival from the irrationality of war: 'Oh non

turbar l'immondo / vivagno, lascia intorno / le cataste brucianti, il fumo forte / sui superstiti! / Se rompi il fuoco [...] / come potrà la mano delle sete / e delle gemme ritrovar tra i morti / il suo fedele?' ('Il tuo volo', vv.11-21, p.210). In *Occasioni* and *La bufera e altro* Montale was a poet ideologically *engagé*, still full of energy towards a return to rationality and democracy. From *Satura* the faecal style reveals a Montale who wants to show his utter disgust towards reality and society and who has little interest or strength left to fight (except in rare outbursts of energy as happens in the case of 'Lettera a Malvolio', *Diario del '71*, pp.456-57). Disillusionment has turned him into the poet 'topo' ('Botta e risposta I', v.49, p.286), the poet 'dattero / di mare' ('Botta e risposta II', v.42-43, p.356, my change), an older, defeated and more alone than ever Arsenio 'delirio / d'immobilità'.

All in all, 'Botta e risposta I' (and generally the 'Botta e risposta' series) offers an example of highly charged social satire on the empty and meaningless status of society conveyed by failed communication between the poetic voice and Clizia, an addressee which had proved to be so important in previous books in connection with metaphysical salvation from the existential and historical reality. At the same time, this poem shows a higher degree of heteroglossic and of unofficial language which intrude into the Italian and European official poetic language than 'Il sogno del prigioniero' showed eight years before, which proves that Montale's temporary silence was indeed a gestation period for a radical poetic change in response to the crisis and failure of Montale's poetic project contained in the first three books.

Notes

¹ Bettarini and Contini in their edition of Montale's poetry *L'opera in versi* (1980) treat 'Botta e risposta I' as made up by two separate poems (see note to text, p.977).

² Examples of images of the fireplace connected to the feeling of home and authenticity can be found in the following texts: 'Sarcofaghi', 3 ('il fuoco che scoppietta / nel caminetto verdeggià', vv.1-2, p.23); 'Piccolo testamento' ('d'una speranza che bruciò più lenta / di un duro ceppo nel focolare', vv.11-12, p.275); 'A Liuba che parte' ('Non il grillo ma il gatto / del focolare / or ti consiglia, splendido / lare della dispersa tua famiglia', vv.1-4, p.128); 'Elegia di Pico Farnese' ('il cupo sonno si desta nella cucina, / dal grande camino giungono lieti rumori', vv.11-12, p.181). Other examples of images of food and the kitchen in *La bufera* are the following: 'la tua voce ribolle, rosso / salmì di cielo e terra a lento fuoco' in 'Il gallo cedrone' (vv.2-3, p.261) and, in 'Per album', the image of a salvation which Clizia-Iride fails to operate for all humanity, but can only save the faithful: 'ho proseguito fino a tardi / senza sapere che tre cassetine / — SABBIA SODA SAPONE, la piccionaia / da cui partì il tuo volo: da una cucina — / si sarebbero aperte per me solo' (vv.14-18, p.270).

³ Some examples are: 'topi di chiavica' ('Madrighali fiorentini', v.4, p.216); 'T'avrei raggiunta anche navigando / nelle chiaviche, a un tuo comando' ('Vento sulla mezzaluna', vv.2-3, p.235); 'alla fiducia con cui parlasti al rospo / uscito dalla fogna' ('Hai dato il mio nome a un albero?', 2, vv.5-7, p.266); 'un rigurgito, un tanfo acre che infetta / le zolle a noi devote' ('Le processioni del 1949', vv.6-7, p.268). For further reference on faecality in Montale's poetry see Martelli (1977, pp.28-41) and Zanzotto (1993, pp.21-28) where the poet also analyzes 'Botta e risposta I'.

⁴ Arsenio, the name of the male poetic voice, is a clear reference to the addressee in the poem 'Arsenio' in *Ossi di seppia* (pp.83-84), the poetic character which was identified by the speaking voice as his soul-mate. Arsenio is also one of the variants of Montale's nicknames (Arsenio-Eugenio-Eusebio) with which he used to sign his letters to his closest friends, it is, thus, possible to see the male voice of 'Botta e risposta I' as a strongly autobiographical voice.

⁵ The annotation '(lettera da Asolo)', which was absent in previous publications of the poem, is added to 'Botta' only from the first Mondadori edition of *Satura* (1971). See Bettarini & Contini (1980, p.977). Mentioning Asolo as the place from where Clizia is writing, means placing Clizia (or possibly Gerti) and, therefore, his poetry in an important geographical-poetic tradition reminiscent of D'Annunzio but, above all of Browning as the adjective invented by Montale 'asolante', i.e. on holiday in Asolo, can be interpreted as a variation of 'Asolando'. On this point see Grignani 1987, p.22. Maria Antonietta Grignani also notes that included in the mention of Asolo (in 'Botta e risposta I') and 'Ascona' (in 'Botta e risposta II') there is 'l'evocazione di un lontano sentimento asburgico slittata sui toponimi' (1987, p.22). For further reflections on the poetic significance of Asolo and on the convergence

Browning-Baudelaire as heads of the modern western poetry see 'Variazioni', in *Corriere della sera*, 27 October 1968.

⁶ Dante uses the image of the sail as a the metaphor of 'ingegno' ('intelligence', 'wits', but also 'talent') in both the *Convivio* and the *Comedy*. See *Convivio* I, i, vv.1-4: 'lo tempo chiama e domanda *la mia nave uscire di porto; / per che, drizzato l'artimone de la ragione a l'ora del mio / desiderio, entro il pelago con isperanza di dolce cammino / e di salutevole porto e laudabile*'[my italics]. In *Purgatorio* (I, vv.1-3) a very similar metaphor is used: 'Per correr miglior acque alza le vele / ormai la navicella del mio ingegno, / che lascia dietro a sé mar sì' crudele'.

⁷ M. A. Grignani refers to the 'communicatio-lack of communication' as a theme which runs along the whole of *Satura* (1987, note 4, p.94). This will become clearer in Chapter Seven.

⁸ It should not be forgotten that in Montale's poetry the poetic voice is described as both an existential and historical-political prisoner of reality. See note 17 in Chapter Five, pp.194-95.

⁹ For the term 'gelde' see *Dizionario della lingua italiana*, 1990, p.809. See also *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana*, 1966ff, vol.6, p.630

¹⁰ The social satire hidden behind the polyphonic non-communication between voices and divinity, is therefore also addressed to the poet himself who in 1938 lost his job at the Gabinetto Vieusseux for not subscribing to the P.N.F. (the Fascist party), but who, later in 1943, published *Finisterre* in Switzerland to avoid political consequences.

¹¹ Further references for a study on Montale's political view of society in his writings (both poetic and journalistic) see Carpi (1971). Umberto Carpi's study of the Montalian ideology centres itself in the poet's writing period between *La bufera e altro* and *Satura*, i.e. those years which represent for Montale, as a poet politically *engagé*, the most difficult years: '[...] a mio avviso non il fascismo, ma guerra, resistenza e dopoguerra rappresentano il momento più complesso e tormentato per quel che riguarda gli intellettuali borghesi antifascisti. Né Montale sfugge alla regola: il 'delirio d'immobilità' e la 'vita strozzata' di Arsenio furono pur costretti ad affrontare le acque sconvolte dalla bufera e dal non minaccioso "dopo" ' (Carpi, 1971, p.19).

Chapter Seven: The poetry in the mud

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this concluding chapter is that of offering more examples of disintegration in the language of the 'secondo Montale'. Montale's poetry from *Satura* reaches a high degree of stylistic and linguistic disintegration where the Montalian voice is perhaps one of the few unifying factors left to function partially as the centre of gravity of a disintegrated poetic universe. As well as a partial continuity of voice, it is possible to single out a constant return through parody to previous poetic images, affirmations and even whole texts. Such a return is marked by a complete change of intonation, but it cannot be denied that re-visiting oneself can be viewed as a way of tying together what is starting to drift apart, a way of securing continuity within disintegration.

From *Satura* poems are apparently scattered adrift and are collected, as the original title of *Satura* — *Rete a strascico* — suggests, haphazardly as a fishing net collects all that comes in its way.¹ Despite the superficially untidy and unplanned structure of Montale's later collections, however, poems create a complicated web of significances which come to the fore only after an attentive examination of the texts. Out of the linguistic and stylistic disintegration which is the result of the new and disillusioned image of reality in his second period of poetic production, a new kind of poetry emerges which unifies and re-interprets his first poetry in the light of his new outlook on the world. Montale's whole production can, thus, be seen to create a macro-text in which his new poetic collections fit with a striking sense of coherence.

The linguistic areas which I shall analyze in order to tie together and complete my study of Montale's worlds (and indeed universe) of poetry in this chapter, will be once more deixis and heteroglossia. On the one hand, through the study of heteroglossia I will complete my overview of the disintegration of Montale's poetic language. On the other hand, through the analysis of deictic signs I shall be able to tie some selected texts from *Satura* to other existing texts from *Ossi* through to *La bufera*, in order to show linguistically and thematically that Montale's collections are indeed coherent chapters of the same book.

7.2 The poetry in the mud

It has been mentioned during the analysis of 'Il sogno del prigioniero' that the parabola is the curve along which the closing text of *La bufera* develops. That was clearly seen in the image of the moth which was trying to fly, but was then stamped to the floor ('mi sono fuso col volo della tarma che la mia suola sfarina sull'impiantito', vv.19-21, p.268) and in the final but hopeless attempt of the poetic persona to raise himself up mentally and morally from his lethargy ('mi sono alzato, sono ricaduto / nel fondo dove il secolo è il minuto', vv.29-30, p.268). After the analysis of 'Botta e risposta I' such metaphors become clear signs that anticipate the fall to the 'palta' which characterizes Montale's poetic production and language from *Satura* onwards.

It is possible to view the whole of Montale's poetic production as forming a parabola. The poetry of the first three books being those in the ascending portion of the parabola and reaching the parabola climax in *Silvae* with the image of the

'Cristofora', but already showing signs of the imminent fall in 'Il gallo cedrone' (p.253) and in 'L'anguilla' (p.254). *Satura* and later collections being the descending part of the parabola and picturing the fall to the 'palta' from the heights of the metaphysical flight. In the second season of Montale's poetic production reality is attentively analyzed in all its institutions which are demolished with no scruples. Reality is the 'palta' and searching for the truth out of its spatio-temporal-historical boundaries has brought no answers to the poet. Thus, the fall to the mud, as anticipated by 'L'anguilla' at the close of *Silvae*, is the only way left for the poetic voice which searches his paradise or hell: 'l'anima verde che cerca / vita là dove solo / morde l'arsura e la desolazione' (vv.20-22, p.254). In this sense Montale's poetry reaches Baudelaire's desperate cry for the fall to death:

Nous voulons, tant ce feu nous brûle le cerveau.
Plonger au fond du gouffre, Enfer ou Ciel, qu'importe?
Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du *nouveau*.
(Les Fleurs du Mal, VIII, vv.137-44, 1957, p.371)

Indeed Montale's fall to the 'gouffre' or 'fossa fuia' ('La bufera', v.17, p.189), i.e. the reality-'palta' indicated in 'Botta e risposta I', finds new images and linguistic realities which his previous poetry had just touched. The poetic and stylistic change in Montale's poetry between *La bufera* and *Satura* is not, however, a complete innovation, but, perhaps, more appropriately a final transformation of images to suit the same ontological search of truth into new poetic matter. The lowering of his search to the ground includes the lowering of his language to the everyday ordinary language (including the language vulgar language), but also the lowering of his tool

of philosophical search, the woman-angel, into a woman-insect, Mosca in *Xenia I* and *Xenia II*, and 'l'angelo nero', no longer the angel endowed with powers of salvation, but the fallen 'miniangelo' of death ('L'angelo nero', v.37, p.370).

Reference to the descent from the heights of metaphysical poetry is mentioned in 'Botta e risposta II' where the poetic voice explains that he has climbed a mountain (perhaps the same mountain of 'Notizie dall'Amiata') only half way up without finding much except for 'alloggio / letto crauti e salsicce in riva al lago' (vv.8-9, p.347). The voice continues explaining 'vivevo allora in cerca di fandonie / da vendere' (vv.10-11, p.347), but that now everything has changed and that 'un formicaio / vale l'altro' (vv.17-18, p.347). If we may compare 'Botta e risposta II' with 'Notizie dall'Amiata', the voice of the latter text was that of the 'poeta-vate' who had isolated and locked himself up within his 'cellula di miele/ di una sfera lanciata nello spazio' (vv.10-11, p.181) on the mountain Amiata ('cono diafano della cima', vv.7-8, p.181), he who had chosen loneliness against everybody and everything on the eve of tragedy and destruction, hoping that Clizia's epiphany would not delay too long and would bring with it some kind of salvation. On the other hand, firstly, in 'Botta e risposta II' once again communication between the poetic voice (author of 'Risposta II') and Clizia's voice (fictitious author of 'Botta II') is unsuccessful, as is clear from the lack of pragmatic and stylistic coherence between 'Botta II' and 'Risposta II', therefore the relationship between the poetic voice and Clizia has changed dramatically and no salvation is expected to come from her. Secondly, the mountain is no longer a place where the voice may witness Clizia's or anybody's epiphany, if all he finds there are 'letto crauti e salsicce' (v.9,

p.347) and if he abandons his trip to the mountain only half way up. Thirdly, if in 'Notizie dall'Amiata' the incipient disintegration of the Montalian language has been detected in the metaphors of sweetness-rot (see section 6.2, pp.197-203), 'Botta e risposta II' connects directly to the closing images of 'Botta e risposta I': 'formicone' (v.2), 'formicaio' (v.17).

These are clear reasons to believe that Montale is suggesting that all his previous poetic affirmations are to be re-interpreted in the light of his new beliefs: that metaphysical poetry cannot bring any light towards the salvation from or understanding of reality. The disintegration of his poetic project is admitted openly, all that is left to do is stay still and imprisoned like 'datteri di mare' ('Botta e risposta II', vv.42-43, p.348) without any hope of being ever freed: 'Ora neppure attendo / che mi liberi un colpo di martello' (*ibidem*, vv.44-45, p.348). His journey up the mountain of poetry, metaphorical for his journey through metaphysical poetry, in search for truth has brought no answers to his quest. Therefore, the jump up towards the sky, the metaphysical flights of salvation attempted by the poet through the angel image of Clizia-Iride have been unsuccessful. The bird-angels have been brutally knocked down to the ground, where the poetic voice has, after all, always been:

Dove t'abbatti dopo il breve sparo
 (la tua voce ribolle, rossonero
 salmì di cielo e terra a lento fuoco)
 anch'io riparo, brucio anch'io nel fosso.
 ('Il gallo cedrone', vv.1-4, p.253)

Like his angels, Montale's poetry must now come down to earth, to the mud which is reality and if looking for some answers from above has failed, it must travel from down below as 'l'anguilla' does:²

l'anguilla, torcia, frusta,
 freccia d'Amore in terra
 che solo i nostri botri o i disseccati
 ruscelli pirenaici riconducono
 a paradisi di fecondazione;
 l'anima verde che cerca
 vita là dove solo
 morde l'arsura e la desolazione.
 ('L'anguilla', vv.15-22, p.254)

In other words, the poetry from *Satura* onwards chooses to travel another route from the previous poetry: if it is not possible to re-unite the forking routes into one, and if the first has failed, then all that is left to do is try the other way. Thus the poetry from *Satura* re-proposes the observation of reality from the mud from where, after all, the poetic voice had never been able or wanted to take off if, as far back as in 'Falsetto' (pp.12-13), he had admired Esterina's dive, but had kept his feet well planted on the ground: 'Ti guardiamo noi, della razza / di chi rimane a terra' (vv.50-51, p.13).

7.3 Heteroglossic effects in *Satura*

The present section proposes the linguistic-stylistic and thematic analysis of some *Satura* texts in order to show the continuous presence of a heteroglossic language in Montale's poetry after 'Botta e risposta I'. In this way, it will become clear that *Satura* presents itself, both from the thematic and linguistic points of view, as a poetic outlook on a disintegrated reality-society.

From *Satura* onwards it is clear that texts belong to various genres, even if all definable as poems, or better, as poems in prose due to their prosaic intonation.³ Their purpose is that of demolishing everyone and everything, especially those aspects of reality which have an untouchable status within society: history ('La storia', p.315), god, religion and their 'ministers' ('La morte di dio', p.319; 'A un gesuita moderno', p.320; 'Piove', p.337),⁴ the organization of society ('Piove', p.337) and of education ('La caduta dei valori', p.496), poetry in its traditional form ('La poesia', pp.324-25; 'Le rime', p.326) and, therefore, also Montale's previous production. However, apart from general demolition, no specific project seems to tie such texts together: the only constant recognizable presence which gives such poems continuity is the poetic voice. The Montalian poetic voice cannot, however, be considered monologic, as it is continually involved in a dialogue either with itself or with other voices who appear and disappear bringing with them fragments of the truth or other points of view on reality.

The opening poem of *Satura*, 'Il tu', shows the shattered nature of the voice of the 'secondo' Montale: the metaphor of the 'uccello preso nel parettaio' (v.7, p.273) clarifies that the poetic voice appears as multiplied by mirrors. Andrea Zanzotto sees 'Il tu' as portraying a reality where 'gli esseri – io, tu, noi, voi – singolarità rifratta in innumerevoli duplicati che a loro volta riverberano falsità e insignificanza, costituiscono un tutto che assomiglia alla "nuova palta" [of 'Botta e risposta I']' (1991, p.32). Seen from the point of view of polyphonic effects within the Montalian poetic world, the mirror images or duplicates of the original 'tu' refer to the presence of different voices which clarify that the central ideology of the poetic voice has

broken up into many pieces each reflecting different aspects of reality. Such a fragmentary view of reality can only have at its basis a problematic ideological state of society.⁵ As a matter of fact, Montale had already referred to the loss of integrity of society since *Conclusioni provvisorie*, in 'Il sogno del prigioniero' (chi obiurga se stesso, ma tradisce / e vende carne d'altri, afferra il mestolo', vv.14-15, p.268) and in 'Piccolo testamento' where he condemned the split between political parties which were tearing Italy between 'chierico rosso, o nero' (v.7, p.267). The political-historical situation of Italy after the Second World War is another example of the existential *mal d'être* from which Montale's poetry takes origin and it deepens the sense of disharmony and of lack of a possible unity in reality. Montale often refers to a choice between two roads which others have made, both poetically, morally and ideologically, to either be 'farcitore o farcito' ('Il sogno del prigioniero', v.33, p.269). However, as has been seen in the examination of 'Il sogno del prigioniero', the poetic voice's lethargy was his conscious way out of a choice which he could not make. Accordingly, in 'Pasquetta' he claims not to have actively chosen his poetic-political-moral route: 'Io sono troppo vecchio per sostare / davanti al bivio. C'era forse un trivio / e mi ha scelto' (vv.15-17, p.550). The true poet should not and does not choose, but endeavours to search for the 'indivisibile':

Non gli hanno detto al bivio che doveva
scegliere tra due vite separate
e intersecanti mai. Lui non l'ha fatto.
È stato il Caso che anche se distratto
rimane a guardia dell'indivisibile.
(*'Il poeta'*, vv.5-9, p.439)

As a poet Montale still believes that he has a role in society, but the true value of this role has been lost, if the intelligentsia has split ideologically into two tendencies ('C'è chi s'immerge e c'è chi non s'immerge', 'Pasquetta', v.9, p.550) and has thus lost its objectivity and integrity. The Montalian poetic voice does not choose. All the others choose, including Clizia who in 'Botta e risposta I' and 'Botta e risposta II' is portrayed as part of the high society and immersed in the empty 'blabla', which is clearly condemned in 'Pasquetta': 'C'est emmerdant si dice da una parte / e dall'altra' (vv.10-11, p.550).⁶ The French expression of impatience and elegant boredom is quickly turned into a faecal metaphor ('Chi sa da quale parte / ci si immerda di meno', vv.11-12, p.550) prolonging, thus, the metaphorical poetry of faecality as far as *Quaderno di quattro anni*.

Montale is disappointed with the Italian intellectual class after the end of the Second World War and he is horrified by what is happening socially and historically during the years of the Cold War. This has already been stated before, but it is necessary to emphasize it in order to understand the real message which is included in his poetry from *Satura* onwards. With the exception of a few poems which can be defined as intimate poetry (especially *Altri versi* and *Diario postumo*), most of Montale's poems from *Satura* have an openly social invective charge, which is conveyed poetically through polyphony and irony.

There are three aspects of Montale's poetry which I shall discuss in the following examination of his production in *Satura*.⁷ Firstly, the mixing of two separate intonations in Montale's idiolect: the juxtaposition of expressions and vocabulary which refers to his private life with Mosca or other friends and the official poetic

language adopted in his fourth book. Secondly, the melange of official and unofficial languages which is used when referring to 'respectable' social institutions produces a general ironical effect of demolition in most of *Satura*'s texts. The presence of private and public, official and unofficial linguistic variants of Montale's idiolect within the more extended and recognizable sociolect create a polyphonic effect in his texts. His language and, therefore, his images do suggest a *chiaroscuro* of clashes: private and public, affectionate and detached, serious and ironical, with a general result that the private sphere is associated with integrity and truthfulness, whilst the public and social spheres, by contrast, assume the connotation of falsity and emptiness. Thirdly, I shall follow once more the developments of the metaphor connected to food, smell and rot, in order to assess its presence in *Satura*. It will become evident that such a theme is still active after 'Botta e risposta I', but that through the collection it assumes new connotations: food and the rituals of nourishment which should satisfy the poetic voice's hunger and thirst for life and truth, cause instead nausea and vomit, bodily functions of expulsion which are similar to defecation and which reconnect to the presence of faecality within Montale's second season of poetry.⁸

7.3.1 Private and public in *Xenia I* and *Xenia II*⁹

Caro piccolo insetto
 che chiamavano mosca non so perché,
 stasera quasi al buio
 mentre leggevo il Deuteroisaia
 sei ricomparsa accanto a me,
 ma non avevi occhiali,

5

non potevi vedermi
 né potevo io senza quel luccichìo
 riconoscere te nella foschia.

Xenia I opens with 'Caro piccolo insetto' (p.281) in which the poetic voice is portrayed in a very private scene whilst reading a chapter of the Bible in his semi-obscure bedroom or study at night. A mini-epiphany occurs when a fly, tentatively recognized as Mosca, comes to visit the poetic voice.¹⁰ The adjectives 'caro' and 'piccolo' (v.1), the appellative 'mosca' (v.2) and the detail of the glasses ('gli occhiali', v.6) indicate the private-affectionate intonation which the poetic voice uses in both *Xenia I* and *Xenia II* when referring to the dead wife.

Mosca indeed is the insect-like visiting angel who comes to the poetic voice in flash-backs of memories and in 'incredibili agnizioni' ('Con astuzia', v.4, p.300), who becomes the mediator between the poetic voice and his ontological search for truth in a reality which turns out to be worthless. In the *Xenia* collections obvious private conversations are referred to which may bring with them some value, if nothing else has value:

Avevamo studiato per l'aldilà
 un fischio, un segno di riconoscimento.
 Mi provo a modularlo nella speranza
 che tutti siamo già morti senza saperlo.
 ('Avevamo studiato per l'aldilà', p.284)

The Montalian poetic voice has often referred to the 'aldilà' (v.1) in previous collections as to the perilous world from which Clizia was periodically coming back bringing with her signs of salvation from reality. The dimension beyond reality was

then charged with metaphysical values. Now, in 'Avevamo studiato per l'aldilà', and more generally in *Xenia I* and *II*, the dimension beyond reality is thought simply as a copy of reality, a 'palta' ('Botta e risposta I',II, v.37, p.278) where it is necessary, however, to look for and find what is worthy. The poetic voice and Mosca have already worked out a private sign of recognition ('un fischio', v.2) through which they may at least find each other again after death. The theme of the afterlife is thus personalized and, at the same time, demolished by the clash of the word 'aldilà' (v.1) which has religious-metaphysical-moral values, and the 'fischio' (v.2) which breaks such values with its sudden vulgar, street-like outburst and which becomes the ontological means for finding truth in the 'palta' of the afterlife.

Mosca's voice appears at times next to that of the poetic persona which clarifies her closeness and similarity to him. In those texts Mosca and the poetic voice refer to details of their private lives such as conversations with each other or with other people ('Il vinattiere ti versava un poco', p.302; '“Non sono mai stato certo di essere al mondo”', p.303; '“E il Paradiso? Esiste un Paradiso?”', p.304) or Mosca's make up, medicines and illnesses ('Non ti sentirò più parlare di antibiotici / velenosi, del chiodo del tuo femore', 'La primavera sbuca col suo passo di talpa', vv.2-3, p.292; 'imprigionata tra bende e gessi', 'Dicono che la mia', v.14, p.294)¹¹ in order to underline truths about reality and the world:

Il vinattiere ti versava un poco
d'Inferno. E tu atterrita: “Devo berlo? Non basta
esserci stati dentro a lento fuoco?”.

In 'Il vinattiere ti versava un poco' reality is compared to hell and living is compared to being cooked 'a lento fuoco' (v.3). Thus, a casual conversation (which may resemble the 'blabla / dell'alta società' during a meal at a restaurant) is charged with irony and philosophical values and manages to demolish, at one time, reality, society and its refined habits, such as drinking fine wine.

In 'Dopo lunghe ricerche' (p.306) Mosca is portrayed in Portugal in the 'Avenida da Liberdade' (vv.2-3) in Lisbon, drinking Madeira accompanied by lobster.

Dopo lunghe ricerche
 ti trovai in un bar dell'Avenida
 da Liberdade; non sapevi un'acca
 di portoghese o meglio una parola
 sola: Madeira. E venne il bicchierino 5
 con un contorno di aragostine.

La sera fui paragonato ai massimi
 lusitani dai nomi impronunciabili
 e al Carducci in aggiunta.
 Per nulla impressionata io ti vedevo piangere 10
 dal ridere nascosta in una folla
 forse annoiata ma compunta.

The rebellious runaway is found again by the poetic voice in the 'Avenida da Liberdade' which symbolizes not just Mosca's freedom, her rebellion against limitations, but also freedom from the political-moral point of view, if the 'Avenida da Liberdade' (vv.2-3) bears the name of Freedom. In the second stanza Mosca is pictured as attending the evening conference in honour of the poetic persona, hidden among 'una folla / forse annoiata ma compunta' (vv.11-12). If Mosca has been associated with expressions of everyday language ('non sapevi un'acca / di portoghese', vv.3-4; 'E venne il bicchierino / con un contorno di aragostine', vv.5-6;

'ti vedevo piangere / dal ridere', vv.10-11) and described as rebellious, the others (the 'folla', v.11) are the human anonymous 'palta' with their fake interests which are only put on as a show: 'una folla / forse annoiata ma compunta' (vv.11-12). The others' language, as opposed to Mosca, is pompous, but empty ('La sera fui paragonato ai massimi / lusitani dai nomi impronunciabili / e al Carducci in aggiunta', vv.7-9), it is a language which is used to impress, thus false and pretentious. Mosca becomes the symbol of spontaneity, of the authentic and the truthful and amongst the high society 'folla' (v.11) she sparkles with her tearful laughter like the 'iride breve' ('L'anguilla', v.26, p.254) sparkles in the mud.

Even syntactically the poem is construed so that the only personae which come to the fore are Mosca and the poetic voice (which is a strongly autobiographical voice): 'Dopo lunghe ricerche / ti trovai in un bar' (vv.1-2), 'non sapevi un'acca / di portoghese' (vv.3-4), 'ti vedevo piangere / dal ridere' (vv.10-11), where only the poetic voice's and Mosca's actions are described with active verbs. All other actions are reported in the passive, in this way only the actions are emphasized, and not who carries them out: 'E venne il bicchierino' (v.5), 'La sera fui paragonato ai massimi / lusitani' (vv.7-8).

It is clear that in 'Dopo lunghe ricerche' the memories of Mosca's private excursion around Lisbon and of the public social occasion create a thematic contrast which, together with the vocabulary and syntactic linguistic structure of the lines, give this poem polyphonic effects. As a matter of fact, most of poems in *Xenia I* and *Xenia II* have a strong polyphonic linguistic component which derives from the clash of private and public memories, languages and voices. Thus Mosca's 'parola [...]

stenta e imprudente' ('La tua parola così stenta e imprudente', v.1, p.288), her apocalyptic laughs, her long telephone conversations and her friends (Clelia and Cap) all become symbols of integrity and authenticity which the rest of society seems to have lost. Set against Mosca, the others (including the poetic voice himself) are empty just like their ideologies.¹² The falsity of society, its need to fill the sense of emptiness with mere 'blabla' or by writing 'prosa o versi' ('Non hai pensato mai di lasciar traccia', v.2, p.286) and, therefore, by using pompous literary language, give rise only to irony and nausea ('la mia nausea di me', *ibidem*, v.3, p.286). The only truths which are left are the private memories of what was real and authentic and must now be found again in broken down stuttering sounds and old familiar objects.¹³

7.3.2 Official and unofficial points of view

Similar to the clash between private and public spheres and languages in the *Xenia* collections, *Satura* presents a series of poems which discuss the value of prestigious and almost untouchable institutions in our society. Society after the two wars has changed a lot, new social classes have gained power and also technology has taken a lot of steps forward. Despite these changes which one should be glad to see in society, Montale underlines a general crisis of society and a tendency to dehumanize the social organization in favour of the machine: in *Satura*, as well as in later collections and in other writings (see *Nel nostro tempo*) Montale denounces the progressive loss of importance of man in an advanced society whose progress has

failed to make man happier. Thus modern society re-proposes the same disharmony which Montale felt from his childhood towards reality.

From the linguistic point of view, once again, it is possible to identify a clash between the personal unofficial outlook and the official technical definition of various aspects of society which create a linguistic contrast and give rise to the Montalian cutting irony in his poetry from *Satura*. Both Maria Corti (1971) and Rebecca West (1981) have emphasized that the linguistic-stylistic extravagances which Montale presents in his poems in *Satura I* and *II*, 'especially poems such as 'Gerarchie' and 'Fanfara' [...] which have as their theme the meaning of history' (West 1981, p.102), originate from his ethical-political satire. The language of *Satura* is indeed a language which opens to all sorts of languages: 'everyday speech, slang dialect, foreign terms and all the other elements that constantly mold a spoken idiom' (West 1981, p.94). However, although these poems give the impression of being linguistically easier, 'the complexity, ambiguity, and intellectual rigor that characterize his [Montale's] earlier poetry are still at work' (West 1981, p.94).

In 'Déconfiture non vuol dire che la crème caramel' (p.314) society is pictured as undergoing a general crisis:

Déconfiture non vuol dire che la crème caramel
uscita dallo stampo non stia in piedi.
Vuol dire altro disastro; ma per noi sconsacrati
e non mai confettati può bastare.

The French word 'déconfiture' (v.1) describes the 'general crisis' Montale is referring to, but, at the same time, the official serious meaning of this word is

demolished by the use of puns: the word 'confiture' ('jam') is associated to 'déconfiture', thus the crisis is associated to 'crème caramel' (v.1) which cannot hold its shape (jam-like). Furthermore, the verb 'confettare' (v.4) which in Italian means both to 'candy fruit' and figuratively to 'cheat', is derived from 'déconfiture' and used to give a derisory intonation to the economical-political depth of the French word.¹⁴ The poetic voice is thus denouncing the falsity of society, laughing at its absurd and pretentious self-esteem, but, at the same time, emphasizing that the poetic persona has never, not for one moment, believed in it or been fooled by its appearance. 'Déconfiture non vuol dire che la crème caramel' shows a clash between official and unofficial reading of society and of social-political terms which frame reality by defining it. This creates a polyphonic effect of serious and ridiculous, cutting irony and inconsolable solitude.

In Montale's view, society is an organization which is undergoing a crisis in all its aspects: arts, poetry, religion, politics, science. Society needs to contain and control man and his activities, but they slip out of its control: the incoherence between the attempt to control and the failure to do so is the area where Montale attacks society and its institutions. Linguistically the clashes of intonation between official language and expressions which belong to other fields continually demolish the aspect of society which is being discussed.

One of the most recurring topics is that of God and the relationship that exists between the divine and man.

Tutte le religioni del Dio unico
sono una sola: variano i cuochi e le cotture.

Così rimuginavo; e m'interruppi quando
 tu scivolasti vertiginosamente
 dentro la scala a chicciola della Périgourdine 5
 e i laggiù ridesti a crepapelle.
 Fu una buona serata con un attimo appena
 di spavento. Anche il papa
 in Israele disse la stessa cosa
 ma se ne pentì quando fu informato 10
 che il sommo Emarginato, se mai fu,
 era perento.

In 'La morte di Dio', p.319) God and religion are associated by the poetic voice to the field of cookery ('Tutte le religioni del Dio unico / sono una sola: variano i cuochi e le cotture. / Così rimuginavo', vv.1-3). Later in lines 8 and 9 the Pope is referred to as having announced officially (and obviously by using a more theological language) the same truth ('Anche il papa / in Israele disse la stessa cosa', vv.8-9). In this way, the Pope's official truth and the poetic voice unofficial intuition are placed on the same level. This creates polyphonic effects which, along with Mosca's laughter ('e di laggiù ridesti a crepapelle', v.6), demolish even the inscrutable word of God ('il sommo Emarginato', v.11) through the Pope's mouth.

In the same way as the word of God is demolished, Montale annihilates the truth of philosophers and of priests (see 'A un gesuita moderno', p.320; 'Götterdämmerung', p.330), the worldly importance given to glory ('Intercettazione telefonica', p.323), the awe felt towards phenomena such as poetry and history, and those scholars (whom Montale sarcastically refers to as 'gli scoliasti', 'La poesia', II, v.3, p.325) who feel that they can define and control them. The organization which man has created to control man, to make him 'happy' has failed in all its aspects (politics, religion, science etc.), thus all that there is left for man is perhaps spontaneity and, as

has already been commented in the previous section, the personal and private take priority on the social-public sphere. What is officially recognized by society thematically, as well as linguistically, is made to clash with the poetic voice's point of view, creating in this way a poetic contrast of official versus unofficial outlooks on the world, where the unofficial point of view acquires a value which comes closer to the truth, because it does not try to define, control and cage reality.

In order to draw some conclusions on the heteroglossic *chiaroscuro* of the language adopted in *Satura* I shall analyze the text 'La poesia'.

I

L'angosciante questione
 se sia a freddo o a caldo l'ispirazione
 non appartiene alla scienza termica.
 Il raptus non produce, il vuoto non conduce,
 non c'è poesia al sorbetto o al girarrosto. 5
 Si tratterà piuttosto di parole
 molto importune
 che hanno fretta di uscire
 dal forno o dal surgelante.
 Il fatto non è importante. Appena fuori 10
 si guardano d'attorno e hanno l'aria di dirsi:
 che sto a farci?

II

Con orrore
 la poesia rifiuta
 le glosse degli scoliasti.
 Ma non è certo che la troppo muta
 basti a se stessa 5
 o al trovarobe che in lei è inciampato
 senza sapere di esserne
 l'autore.

The theme of the poem is that of what is inspiration and how poetry is conceived and then shaped into a text. The main question ('l'angosciante questione', I, v.1) on which part I of 'La poesia' is built is whether inspiration and poetry are created 'a freddo o a caldo' (I, v.2), that is whether poetry is thought out coldly or if it is conceived spontaneously, almost irrationally. Montale brings the intonation of the reasoning down to everyday language by using the colloquial expression 'a freddo o a caldo' (I, v.2) and then derails it to another register by introducing the field of science ('la scienza termica', I, v.3) into the question of poetic inspiration. In this way polyphony is introduced by reference to different fields of knowledge (poetry and science) and by formal and informal linguistic expressions. The question of how poetry is 'produced' (a question which is obviously raised by the 'scolasti' of part II) is transformed into a scientific question to which no satisfactory scientific answers can be found: 'Il raptus non produce, il vuoto non conduce' (I, v.4). The verbs 'produrre' and 'condurre' are of clear scientific origin and connected to machinery, industry and physics. Once again, the linguistic register is derailed to another field, that of cookery which has already been recognized as one of the themes present in Montale's poetry since the first collections: 'non c'è poesia al sorbetto o al girarrosto' (I, v.5) and then 'che hanno fretta di uscire dal forno o dal surgelante' (I, vv.8-9). Despite the frequent change of register (from the field of poetry-philosophy, to colloquial language, to science and, finally, to cookery) the text 'La poesia' maintains a high internal coherence as all terms which have been brought into the texts keep referring to the concepts of 'cold' and 'heat'. In this way, the polyphonic effects created by this text, suggest also a playful and ironical (and even kind)

outlook on the world. Poetry is described in this poem as 'parole / molto importune / che hanno fretta di uscire' (I, vv.6-8) but which once they have managed to find a shape through language, are not understood or read, or have no function: 'si guardano d'attorno e hanno l'aria di dirsi: / che sto a farci?' (I, vv.11-12). Rebecca West emphasizes the paradox created by poems such as 'La poesia':

on the one hand Montale deemphasizes the estranging qualities of poetry by using more prosaic language and more accessible themes. On the other hand he subtly emphasizes the fact that by its very nature poetry is thoroughly imbued with its own estrangement from the reality of life and from the language of quotidian exchange' (1981, p.95).

It is through poems such as 'La poesia' (p.324), 'Le rime' (p.326), 'La mia musa' (p.429), 'Il poeta' (p.439), 'Le Figure' (p.472), 'I poeti defunti dormono tranquilli...' (p.613) that Montale expresses the loss of the role of poetry, its redundancy in a world where all must be subdued to control, to scientific understanding. Modern man is alive in a society which is 'tutta una catena alla quale non può mancare alcun anello. (Tra parentesi: quando tutti gli anelli tengono, quando l'incasellamento è completo allora si hanno i secoli vuoti, senza poesia' (*Nel nostro tempo*, p.52). Poetry remains a product of spontaneity, it cannot be framed as it resists and rejects 'le glosse degli scolasti' (II, v.3), but it trips over the 'trovarobe' (II, v.6) who becomes without knowing it, its author. Poetry, just like Mosca which in *Xenia I* and *II* was recognized as the insect-like Clizia, the 'iride [...] nel fango' of *Satura*, represents the supremacy of spontaneity and life over the rigid, controlled and official look of society.

7.3.3 Food, rituals of nourishment and bodily functions in *Satura*

The developments of the metaphor of food-rot and smell into stench and rotting food had been followed in preparation for the analysis of 'Botta e risposta I'. A further examination of that theme which was closely connected to the presence of satire and polyphony in Montale's language, will show that *Satura* continues proposing images of bodily functions and waste as a poetic reaction to socio-political-historical disintegration and degradation of reality.

In 'L'alluvione ha sommerso il pack dei mobili' the poetic voice describes reality and himself as being invaded by 'un'atroce morsa / di nafta e di sterco' (vv.11-12, p.310) which is the 'realtà incredibile e mai creduta' (v.17, p.310), the 'nuova palta' in which Montale's poetry is now immersed. Such a reality is described all throughout *Satura* as false and insignificant, and in it two main tendencies are developed: a tendency to denounce all those aspects which are rotting and waste-like and a tendency to save what is connected to his past, to his private 'orto', his childhood.

The wasteland of *Satura* is just as desolated as that of the first three books, but instead of being characterized by marine landscapes which were crossed by the visiting angel in flight, they are landscapes of 'paniccia' ('A un gesuita moderno', v.4, p.320), of 'palta' ('Botta e risposta I', II, v.37, p.278) and of human bellows and excrements ('nei corridoi, sempre più folti / di letame', 'Botta e risposta I', II, vv.6-7, p.277) visited by 'Mosca', the fly (or even the 'hellish fly', 'Gli ultimi spari', v.5, p.339), metaphorically the dark insect-like new Montalian angel ('miniangelo /

spazzacamino', 'L'angelo nero', vv.37-38, p.369), but also the insect which lives near and feeds from rotting waste.

The metaphors of eating and drinking are connected to the experience of reality

Il vinattiere ti versava un poco
d'Inferno. E tu atterrita: 'Devo berlo? Non basta
esserci stati dentro a lento fuoco?'
(*'Il vinattiere ti versava un poco'*, p.302)

where having experienced life is compared to having been cooked on a low flame. If in 'Botta e risposta II' the poetic voice refers to his life as to the act of travelling and eating ('Non prometteva niente di buono, trovai alloggio / letto crauti e salsicce in riva al lago', II, vv.8-9, p.347) in 'Botta e risposta III' the metaphor of food and nourishment is lowered to eating rotting fish:

Ricordo ancora l'ostiere
Di Xilocastron, il menu
dove lessi barbunia, indovinai
ch'erano triglie e lo furono,
anche se marce, e mi parvero
un dono degli dèi.
(II, vv.35-40, p.361)

Hunger becomes metaphorical for desire of life, but reality offers nothing or little, and whatever is found is disappointing, or rotten. Yet finding something to eat, even if rotten, is better than the chaos of emptiness:

Ma ero pur sempre nel divino. Ora
vivo dentro due chiese che si spappolano,
dissacrate da sempre, mercuriali,
dove i pesci che a gara vi boccheggiano

sono del tutto eguali.
 ('Botta e risposta III', II, vv.52-56, p.361)

Both 'Botta e risposta II' and 'Botta e risposta III' compare within their texts the socio-political-historical periods to which Montale had referred as 'la mia prigionia e il mio dopo' ('Botta e risposta I', v.47, p.278), and in all three poems of the 'Botta e risposta' series the first period is connoted by images of food, even if rotting. Linguistically, the discourse referring to the first period uses words belonging to the field of food and cookery: thus in 'Botta e risposta I' the words 'stracolmi imbuti', (II, v.12, p.277), 'forconi' (II, v.13, p.277), 'spiedi' (II, v.13, p.277), 'un'infilzata' (II, v.13, p.277) and 'saltimbocca' (II, v.14, p.277) are nouns which refer to precise cooking tools and dishes. In the same way 'crauti' (v.9, p.347) and 'salsicce' (v.9, p.347) in 'Botta e risposta II' are precise dishes, and so are 'barbunia' (v.37, p.361), i.e. 'triglie' (v.38, p.361) in 'Botta e risposta III'. On the other hand, the discourse referring to the second period (reality after the Second World War) uses nouns which indicate images of human waste, of mud, of collecting and liquidized sewage.¹⁵ In particular, in 'Botta e risposta III', the metaphor of food preparation is prolonged into the discourse referring to the second poetic-historical period: the verb 'spappolano' (v.53, p.361) refers to food which has been liquidized or cooked for too long and thus has lost its shape. Society and its institutions are described as being overcooked ('Ora / vivo dentro due chiese che si spappolano, / dissacrate da sempre, mercuriali', vv.52-54, p.361) and in this way their untouchable social-religious status is demolished.

It has been said that eating and drinking are acts symbolical of desire for life as becomes even clearer in 'Rebecca' (p.403), a biblical character who shares the Montalian poetic voice's same destiny:

Rebecca era assetata, io famelico,
ma non saremo assolti.
Non c'era molt'acqua nell'uadi, forse qualche pozzanghera,
e nella mia cucina poca legna da ardere.
(vv.9-12, p.403)

Both the Montalian poetic voice and Rebecca search for life that is worth living, but all they find is unsatisfied hunger and thirst if all that is available to them is 'qualche pozzanghera' (v.11, p.403) and ordinary food ('gamella', v.7, p.403) and a cold kitchen with 'poca legna da ardere' (v.12, p.403).¹⁶ Thus their search for life ends also in the mud and in the dark chimney where an epiphany is no longer even expected.

The metaphors for the desire and search for life and truth are expressed through the rituals of cooking and eating. However, it is through the disappointment in the satisfaction of hunger and thirst and in the bad outcome of food cooking that the poetic voice describes his failure to find a reality which is worth continuing to believe in. Reality is described as collecting sewage ('una chiusa di sterco su cui scarica / acqua bollente un pseudo oleificio', 'Dopo una fuga', 'Quando si giunse al borgo...', vv.11-12, p.388) and truth as being 'nei rosicchiamenti / delle tarme e dei topi, / nella polvere ch'esce da cassettoni ammuffiti / e nelle croste dei "grana" stagionati' ('La verità', vv.1-4, p.582).

Venice, in 'Due prose veneziane' I, is the reality remembered in a flashback of a holiday in 1934 (probably with Clizia) where nothing seems to come to terms with anything else in a background of 'tanfo di scampi fritti, / qualche zaffata di nausea dal canale' (vv.2-3, p.391) where again smell of food and of vomit are associated. Even better, in 'Due prose veneziane' II, whilst people are in the restaurant, presumably eating, they gossip about people and places, and such gossip ('blabla / dell'alta società') contains references to three cities in particular, Paris, London and New York, the same cities of which mention was made in 'Piccolo testamento' and which are indeed symbolic for the whole western civilisation. Yet, if in 'Piccolo testamento' on such cities an imminent apocalypse was anticipated, in 'Due prose veneziane' II, Paris, London and New York are described as dirty and stinking: 'Parigi Londra un porcaio, / New York stinking, pestifera' (vv.17-18, p.392). Line 18 is then completed by the noun 'palude' which associates New York to a swamp and adds the connotation of mud and rot. In these lines the syntax of the sentence is eliminated, all that is left is the name of the cities and a noun or adjective which summarizes their description, by underlining that all is dirty, stinking and pestiferous, and by flattening everything else to rot: reality loses its characteristics and becomes 'palta' and so does the language that describes it. In line 22 there follows the conclusion 'Tutto è rotten, marcio'.¹⁷ All is rotten then, and definitely 'Il trionfo della spazzatura' shows a reality where 'lo sciopero dei netturbini' (v.1, p.449) shows the real face of Rome ('L'Urbe', v.2, p.449). Thus Rome's glorious aspect ('Fuori le vecchie mura ostentano la miseria, / la gloria della loro sopravvivenza', vv.7-8, p.449) is knocked down and re-dimensioned as it turns out to be 'lordura' (v.3,

p.449) which in order to reach one must sail around 'isole e laghi / di vomiticcio e di materie plastiche' (vv.11-12, p.449). The journey to the 'Urbe' and metaphorically to truth, has been undertaken through dirt and vomit, still one reaches nothing more than 'lordura'.

Hunger for food finds full satisfaction only in the rituals of nourishment of childhood, the only time when one touched happiness and lived in the paradise of youth (see 'Un mese tra i bambini', pp.355-56). The poetic voice thus regresses back to his memories of when he was a child and with the other children was hunting, cooking and eating birds and eels. The satisfaction of hunger is a memory which brings the Montalian voice back to his private 'orto' of memories and to the 'focolare' of his affections (see 'I limoni' in *Ossi di seppia*, 'La casa delle due palme' and 'Il bello viene dopo' in *Farfalla di Dinard*), but all he finds there are the ashes of the 'angelo nero', the remainders of his roasted prey which, together with his poetry-philosophy, has burnt to extinction. Thus the past is only a burnt dream, the present is a 'canale che scorre silenzioso / maleodorante' ('Soliloquio', vv.1-2, p.548) and the future is hungry: 'il futuro ha appetito non si contenta più / di hors-d'oeuvre e domanda schidionate / di volatili frolli, nauseabonde delizie' (*ibidem*, vv.12-14, p.548). As in his first three books, the Montalian search extinguishes itself in the furious passage of time which seems to accelerate in its insatiable hunger for human life and leaves behind only decomposing matter.

7.4 'Ho scritto un solo libro'

This chapter has dealt mainly with the final thematic and linguistic disintegration of Montale's poetry in the poems of *Satura*. However, although the poetry of the 'secondo' Montale tends to shatter into fragmentary poetic production, in the sense that it uses different types of discourse and styles as has been seen until now, it clearly shows strong connections with the poetry of the first three books.

Despite the deep changes which have taken place in the years of poetic silence between the publication of *La bufera e altro* and *Satura* and even after the publication of *Diario del '71 e del '72*, Montale claims that all of his poetry offers continuity, and that the two seasons of production 'sono il retto e il verso / della stessa medaglia' ('Il frullato', vv.22-23, p.443).

Quite a few texts which belong to the second period contain references to previous poems which create a link between collections which stand apart by many years: 'Forse un mattino andando' (1923) and 'Gli uomini che si voltano' (1969), 'Il sogno del prigioniero' (1954) and 'Ai tuoi piedi' (1976), 'Voce giunta con le folaghe' (1947) and 'Due destini' (1973), 'Mezzo secolo fa' (1975) and the collection *Ossi di seppia* (1925).¹⁸ The inter-textual references which tie these texts can be seen to work also as intra-textual references as the referential deictics manage to make chunks of the Montalian discourse turn to other chunks of the same discourse: it follows that referential deictics function also as discourse deictics. In this sense the images and metaphors which were used in previous texts and have already become shared knowledge, when referred to again through deixis (mainly referential deixis) trigger schemata which the (expert) reader of Montale recognizes at first sight. This

final section aims at tying together some of the signs which make Montale's poetic collections stand together as chapters of the same book, parts, even if opposed to each other, of the same poetic universe. I shall try and identify, through the examination of deictic signs and of repeated metaphors, the relationship which links sample texts of different collections and which allows us to say that Montale's whole poetic production is indeed a coherent single book.

7.4.1 'Vasca' and 'Ribaltamento': the *recto* and the *verso* of the same dream.

La vasca è un grande cerchio, vi si vedono
 ninfee e pesciolini rosa pallido.
 Mi sporgo e vi cado dentro ma dà l'allarme
 un bimbo della mia età.
 Chissà se c'è ancora acqua. Curvo il braccio 5
 e tocco il pavimento della mia stanza.

Spatial deictics:

'vi si' (v.1)
 'vi cado dentro' (v.3)

Subjectivity deictics:

None

Temporal deictics:

'vedono' (v.1)
 'sporgo' (v.3)
 'cado' (v.3)
 'dà' (v.3)

Discourse deictics:

'La vasca' (v.1)
 'vi cado dentro' (v.3)

Referential deictics:

'La vasca' (v.1)
 'l'allarme' (v.3)
 'il braccio' (v.5)
 'il pavimento' (v.6)

Syntactic deictics:

None

Origo deictics:

'Mi sporgo' (v.3)
 'cado' (v.3)
 'mia età' (v.4)
 'curvo' (v.5)
 'tocco' (v.6)
 'mia' (v.6)

The origins of this poem lie in a childhood recurring nightmare which the poet has of falling into a pool in Monterosso al mare, the village where he spent the summers with his family as a child.¹⁹ As a matter of fact, 'Ribaltamento' reveals itself as a bad dream in the last line when the poetic persona (identified by the various *origo* deictics reported above) extends his hand and instead of finding water he touches the floor of his room: 'Curvo il braccio / e tocco il pavimento della mia stanza' (vv.5-6). Thus 'Ribaltamento' is the tale of a recurring nightmare, and this explains the use of the definite article 'la' in 'La vasca' (v.1), which functions as a referential deictic: the poetic persona can use a definite article to refer to the same dream which comes back to him and which narratorially has become shared knowledge. But 'Ribaltamento' is also a 'turnover' of something, and as 'ribaltamento' is the title of the poem, the whole poem must be read bearing in mind that perhaps it can be identified as the *verso* of another situation or poem. It could be argued that in 'La vasca' (v.1) the definite article functions also as a discourse deictic sign, that is a sign which turns the text onto itself by making us see as part of the same discourse not only the linguistic organization of the single poem, but also that of the macro text, that is the whole of Montale's poetic production. The definite article 'la' in 'La vasca' (v.1) assumes an anaphoric value which makes the reader look back within the poetic discourse to another occurrence of 'vasca' which, once introduced, has become shared knowledge. The referential-discourse deictic takes us back to 'Vasca' (p.71) and the title 'Ribaltamento' makes us wonder whether perhaps 'Vasca' could be its *recto* version. A closer analysis of the dynamics of 'Ribaltamento' in relation to those in 'Vasca' will clarify their relationship.

As 'Ribaltamento' opens, the use of the present tense shows that the poetic persona is deep in his dream and has regressed back to childhood: 'La vasca è un grande cerchio' (v.1), 'vi si vedono / ninfee e pesciolini rosa pallido' (vv.1-2), 'mi sporgo e vi cado dentro' (v.3), 'ma dà l'allarme / un bimbo della mia età' (vv.3-4). The use of the present tense shows that the poetic persona is involved in the dynamics of the events happening within the text: even if it is only in a dream, the poetic persona leans forward and falls into the pool. If these events recounted in the text are compared to those recounted in 'Vasca', it is possible to see that the actions are of opposite directions: in 'Vasca' the poetic persona was perhaps leaning forward over the pool, but he was not falling into it. Quite the opposite. He was looking at another entity which was trying to emerge ('erompere', v.11, p.71) out of the pool. This suggests that the actions are opposed to each other, which creates a mirror-imaging game between the two texts.

The verb 'erompere' in 'Vasca' and the verb 'cado' in 'Ribaltamento' are verbs which bear in them a direction and have a deictic value. In Chapter Three these type of verbs were identified as indicative of entry into or exit out of liminality. However, neither the entity in 'Vasca', nor the poetic persona in 'Ribaltamento' are successful in finding the broken mesh in order to leap out of their realities. In 'Vasca' the entity returns downwards towards non-existence, in 'Ribaltamento' the poetic persona touches the floor of his room, thus waking up to reality. If in 'Vasca', the pool's surface ('il tremulo vetro', v.1, p.71) breaks for a moment to let the poetic persona see through it, in 'Ribaltamento' the persona falls into the water (i.e. breaks through the surface) only in his dream, but once awake comes in contact with a surface which

will not open to let him through. The spatio-temporal structure of 'Vasca' allowed liminality as a passage zone between here and there and, thus, included a search for a metaphysical dimension as an escape from reality. On the other hand, 'Ribaltamento' excludes *a priori* liminality: the possibility to step into the other dimension can only happen in dreams, but as soon as one is awake again, he is glad to find out that passage to the other side is not allowed, and that perhaps the other side does not even exist. Opening to the other side and hope as a metaphysical salvation which characterizes Montale's first three books, turns into closeness and flattening to one dimension in the poetry of the 'secondo' Montale.

It is possible at this point to say that indeed 'Vasca' and 'Ribaltamento' are opposite faces of the same episode or dream and that they are linked to each other linguistically through discourse deixis and verbs of movement which bear in their semantic meaning a deictic value. This allows the reader to see linguistic and thematic signs of continuity between the first and the second seasons of Montale's poetic production.

7.4.2 'L'angelo nero'

O grande angelo nero fuliginoso riparami sotto le tue ali, che io possa sorradere i pettini dei pruni, le luminarie dei forni e inginocchiarmi sui tizzi spenti se mai vi resti qualche frangia delle tue penne	5
 o piccolo angelo buio,	 10

non celestiale né umano,
 angelo che traspari
 trascolorante difforme
 e multiforme, eguale
 e ineguale nel rapido lampeggio 15
 della tua incomprensibile fabulazione

o angelo nero disvelati
 ma non uccidermi col tuo fulgore,
 non dissipare la nebbia che ti aureola,
 stampati nel mio pensiero 20
 perché non c'è occhio che resista ai fari,
 angelo di carbone che ti ripari
 dentro lo scialle della caldarrostaia

grande angelo d'ebano
 angelo fosco 25
 o bianco, stanco di errare
 se ti prendessi un'ala e la sentissi
 scricchiolare

non potrei riconoscerti come faccio
 nel sonno, nella veglia, nel mattino 30
 perché tra il vero e il falso non una cruna
 può trattenere il bipede o il cammello,
 e il bruciaticcio, il grumo

che resta sui polpastrelli
 è meno dello spolvero 35
 dell'ultima tua piuma, grande angelo
 di cenere e di fumo, miniangelo
 spazzacamino.

Spatial deictics:

None

Origo deictics:

'O grande angelo' (v.1)

'riparami' (v.2)

'le tue ali' (v.3)

'che io possa' (v.4)

'inginocchiarmi' (v.6)

'delle tue penne' (v.9)

'o piccolo angelo' (v.10)

'angelo che traspari' (v.12)

'della tua' (v.16)

Syntactic deictics:

None

Discourse deictics:'angelo' (vv.1,10,17,22,
24,25,32,37)

'le tue ali' (v.3)

'i pettini dei pruni' (v.5)

'le luminarie dei forni'

'sui tizzi' (v.7)

'delle tue penne' (v.9)

'nel ... lampeggio' (v.15)

'col tuo fulgore' (v.18)

Referential deictics:

'le tue ali' (v.3)

'i pettini dei pruni' (v.5)

'le luminarie dei forni'
[(v.5)]

'sui tizzi' (v.7)

'delle tue penne' (v.9)

'nel ... lampeggio' (v.15)

'della tua ... fabulazione'
[v.16]

'col tuo fulgore' (v.18)

'la nebbia che' (v. 19)

'ai fari' (v. 21)

Origo deictics:

'o angelo' (v.17)
 'disvélati' (v.17)
 'non uccidermi' (v.18)
 'ti aureola' (v.19)
 'stampati' (v.20)
 'nel mio pensiero' (v.20)
 'angelo di carbone' (v.22)
 'ti ripari' (v.22)
 'grande angelo' (v.24)
 'angelo fosco' (v.25)
 'ti prendessi' (v.27)
 'la sentissi' (v.27)
 'non potrei riconoscerti' (v.29)
 'come faccio' (v.29)
 'tua piuma' (v.36)
 'grande angelo' (v.36)
 'miniangelo / spazzacamino' (vv.37-38)

Discourse deictics:

'nel sonno' (v.30)
 'nella veglia' (v.30)
 'il bruciaticcio' (v.33)
 'dell'ultima...piuma'
 [(v.36)]

Temporal deictics:

'lo scialle della
 [caldarrostaia' (v.24)
 'nel sonno' (v.30)
 'nella veglia' (v.30)
 'nel mattino' (v.30)
 'il vero e il falso' (v.31)
 'il bipede o il cammello'
 [(v.32)
 'il bruciaticcio' (v.33)
 'il grumo' (v.33)
 'sui polpastrelli' (v.34)
 'dello spolvero' (v.35)
 'dell'ultima...piuma'
 [(v.36)
 'riparami' (v.2)
 'disvélati' (v.17)
 'non uccidermi' (v.18)
 'stampati' (v.20)

Subjectivity deictics:

'che io possa' (v.4)
 'non potrei' (v.29)

The theme of the demolition of the visiting angel has already been mentioned in a previous chapter (Chapter Four, Section 4.2, pp.141-42) in connection with the study of the dynamics of the poetic voice in Montale's poetry. There reference had been made to the later poem 'L'immane farsa umana' from the collection *Quaderno di quattro anni* where the angel of salvation had been brutally knocked down with no regret. On the other hand, it is clear from the intonation of 'L'angelo nero' that the detachment from the figure-myth of the angel is quite difficult and painful.

The title of the poem is a noun phrase defined by a definite article: 'L'angelo nero' which triggers the schema of the visiting angel, but slightly modifies it as the visiting angel in *Occasioni* and in *La bufera* was an angel of light who brought salvation to the poetic voice. In this poem, on the other hand, the charismatic image of the angel

of darkness appears: 'O grande angelo nero / fuligginoso riparami' (vv.1-2). The angel described has all the characteristics of the angel-bird already referred to in previous collections: she has wings ('le tue ali', v.3; 'se ti prendessi un'ala', v.27) and feathers ('qualche frangia / delle tue penne', vv.8-9; 'dell'ultima tua piuma', v.36), she dazzles who looks at her with her light ('nel rapido lampeggio', v.15; 'non uccidermi col tuo fulgore', v.18). The main connotation that comes to the fore is however that of darkness which is incorporated through adjectives or noun phrases in the various vocatives which abound in the text: 'O grande angelo nero / fuligginoso' (v.1), 'o piccolo angelo buio' (v.10), 'o angelo nero' (v.17), 'angelo di carbone' (v.22), 'grande angelo d'ebano' (v.24), 'angelo fosco' (v.25), 'grande angelo / di cenere e di fumo' (vv.36-37) and 'miniangelo / spazzacamino' (vv.37-38). The schema of the visiting angel is thus modified into that of the angel of salvation by death. However, this is not done suddenly in 'L'angelo nero', but it is the result of a long process of modifications in the images of the various angels which visit the Montalian texts.

The connotations of the angel of salvation-death are by no means new in Montale's poetry: indeed the angel figure was showing signs of an imminent fall both physical and moral. In 'Ti libero la fronte dai ghiaccioli' the angel has 'le penne lacerate / dai cicloni' (vv.3-4, p.144) and her epiphany awaited by the poet turns out to be an anti-epiphany if it is the poetic voice which saves, by taking care of her, the exhausted angel. The addressee of '*La frangia dei capelli*' who could also be identified as an angel ('l'ala onde tu vai, / trasmigratrice Artemide ed illesa', vv.8-9, p.195) had also appeared in the sky with a sudden fall: 'scesa / d'un balzo, e irrequieta la tua fronte /

si confonde con l'alba', vv.12-14, p.195). In 'Dal treno' the poetic voice, whilst looking for 'tortore colore solferino' (v.1, p.231), spots out his angel-bird who suddenly takes off and falls into a swamp ('Per me solo / balenò, cadde in uno stagno', vv.7-8, p.231). These are but anticipatory signs that the angel's flight and her light are destined to be extinguished into darkness-mud.

There are other examples of fallen angels in *La bufera*, but reference should be made to 'Il gallo cedrone' (p.253), '*Nubi color magenta...*' (p.261) and 'Piccolo testamento' (p.267).²⁰ In 'Il gallo cedrone' the bird-angel is described as having been hit by a gunshot and as falling down to the 'fosso' (v.4, p.253) where the poetic voice is hiding, but also burning-roasting: 'anch'io riparo, brucio anch'io nel fosso' (v.4, p.253). The destiny of both the bird and the poetic voice is that of death by burning:

Era più dolce
vivere che affondare in questo magma,
più facile disfarsi al vento che
qui nel limo, incrostati sulla fiamma.
(*'Il gallo cedrone'*, vv.5-8, p.253)

Burning to death and turning into ashes is not only a sign of disintegration, but is also symbolic of purification and rebirth and, indeed, the 'gallo cedrone' and the poetic voice leave a heredity that may guarantee a new life out of their death:

Zuffe di rostri, amori, nidi d'uova
marmorate, divine! Ora la gemma
delle piante perenni, come il bruco,
luccica al buio, Giove è sotterrato.
(*Ibidem*, vv.13-16, p.253)

The 'angelo nero' is, thus, also interpretable as the burnt angel, which would explain 'grande angelo / di cenere e di fumo' (vv.36-37, p.369) in 'L' angelo nero'. In 'Il gallo cedrone' it becomes clear that the poetic flight cannot last very long as the bird (metaphorical for Montale's poetry) is destined to land in the mud and be destroyed.

In *Madrigali privati* an attempt to leave the mud is sought again, however the addressee of *Madrigali privati* is no longer Clizia, but Volpe, a feminine figure whose role in Montale's poetry is opposite to that of Clizia. Clizia is the angel, the platonic-philosophical love and the mediator between the poetic voice and the divinity, she then can be thought as belonging to the sky and that is why she is often represented by an angel or a bird. On the other hand, Volpe is the carnal love, she is the anti-Clizia and, in fact, her flight in '*Nubi color magenta...*' is possible because of the tandem and starts from the mud:

quando dissi "pedala,
angelo mio!" e con un salto
il tandem si staccò dal fango.
(*'Nubi color magenta...*', vv.3-5, p.261)

Even if Volpe is referred to as 'angelo mio' (v.4), she is described as a more sinister presence: 'e la tua ala d'ebano / occupò l'orizzonte / col suo fremito lungo, insostenibile' (vv.10-12, p.261). Once the original angel of salvation (which coincided with Clizia-Iride) has ended her flight in the mud, the new angel which takes off from the mud is a dark angel, an angel not of salvation but of destruction, of purification by death in the hope that from that death some new life may take origin.

Volpe is then the real fallen angel with all the charge of hope and expectation of a new future flight which may have its origins from destruction:

se t'hanno assomigliato
 a un carnivoro biondo, al genio perfido
 delle fratte (e perché non all'immondo
 pesce che dà la scossa, alla torpedine?)
 è forse perché i ciechi non ti videro
 sulle scapole gracili le ali,
 perché i ciechi non videro il presagio
 della tua fronte incandescente, il solco
 che vi ho graffiato a sangue, croce cresima
 incantesimo jattura voto vale
 perdizione e salvezza.
 ('*Se t'hanno assomigliato...*', vv.15-25, p.259)

Salvation can only take origin from damnation, life from destruction and that is clear in 'Piccolo testamento' where the most fallen of the angels, Lucifer, is dramatized as a character:

Conservane la cipria nello specchietto
 quando spenta ogni lampada
 la sardana si farà infernale
 e un ombroso Lucifero scenderà su una prora
 del Tamigi, del Hudson, della Senna
 scuotendo l'ali di bitume semi-
 mozze dalla fatica, a dirti: è l'ora.
 ('Piccolo testamento', vv.13-19, p.267)

Lucifer, the angel of darkness, is described as a tired angel with tar-like wings, which reminds us of some of the descriptions of Clizia ('hai le penne lacerate / dai cicloni', 'Ti libero la fronte dai ghiaccioli', vv.3-4, p.144; 'scura, l'ali ingrommate, stronche dai / geli dell'Antilibano', 'Sulla colonna più alta', vv.8-9, p.228). Likewise, the name of Lucifer and those of Clizia and Iride all carry the meaning of light in their

etymology: by the end of *La bufera* Clizia-Iride is described as a fallen angel, like Lucifer, and, like Lucifer, her destiny is to leave the sky and to abide in the mud. After all, the double nature of the Montalian angel had been clear since *Occasioni* if reference is made back to 'Eastbourne' where the addressee's epithet was 'luce-in-tenebra' and incineration as the destiny of reality was already pre-announced:

Vince il male... La ruota non s'arresta.

Anche tu lo sapevi, luce-in-tenebra.

Nella plaga che brucia, dove sei
scomparsa al primo tocco delle campane, solo
rimane l'acre tizzo che già fu
Bank holiday.
(*'Eastbourne'*, vv.39-44, p.170)

Furthermore, the choice between light and darkness and the preference for the latter are confessed in 'Di un natale metropolitano' ('i tuoi ricci bergère fra santini e ritratti', v.4, p.224) and in 'Lasciando un "Dove"' ('ho amato il sole, / il colore del miele, or chiedo il bruno', vv.3-4, p.225). The passage from angel of light and salvation to angel of darkness and perdition was being prepared from the *Occasioni* collection and reaches its climax in the closing text of *Silvae* 'L'anguilla' (p.254). Clizia-Iride is then the angel of salvation who is destined to fall, 'L'anguilla' is the angel already fallen to the mud who pre-announces Volpe, and the poetry of *Satura* which travels from below, from destruction.

In 'L'anguilla' it is indeed possible to envisage the final metamorphosis of the woman-angel-poetry which has functioned as the main thematic nucleus of *La bufera* and which represents the final hope, that hope 'che bruciò più lenta / di un duro

ceppo nel focolare' ('Piccolo testamento', vv.11-12, p.267) which Montale holds on to at least until the close of *La bufera e altro*. If Clizia has failed, now the 'anguilla' becomes 'la sirena / dei mari freddi' (vv.1-2, p.254) (no longer an angel but a mermaid, the creature who brings to insanity and kills with her singing, symbol of the poetry of damnation instead of salvation), 'torcia, frusta, / freccia d'amore in terra' (vv.15-16, p.254) through which as Francesco Zambon explains

la 'sorella' della Cristofora eredita e anzi sviluppa pienamente gli attributi fallici del Pesce - 'torcia, frusta, / freccia d'Amore', 'paradisi di fecondazione', 'anima verde che cerca / vita' - realizzando quella fusione di 'dio e phallus' o quella 'continuazione di Cristo malgrè lui' che nella *Elegia* era solo evocata apotropaicamente.²¹ (Zambon, 1994, p.67)

Thus after *Silvae* salvation is not to be expected from Clizia, but from her sister, the fallen angel be it 'La trota nera' ('il suo balenio di carbonchio', v.5, p.223), or 'l'immondo pesce', i.e. Volpe ('*Se t'hanno assomigliato...*', vv.17-18, p.259), or 'l'anguilla' ('bronco seppellito', 'L'anguilla', v.25, p.254) which will sacrifice her life ('l'anima verde che cerca / vita là dove solo / morde l'arsura e la desolazione', *ibidem*, vv.20-22, p.254) in order to procreate life ('tutto comincia quando tutto pare / incarbonirsi', *ibidem*, vv.24-25, p.254).²² 'L'anguilla' is thus the matrix text of all the second season of poetic production in which everything is demolished in order to start from fresh, to find some kind of secular salvation from destruction; 'l'anguilla' is the burnt angel which travels to die in the mud, but whose 'iride breve' (v.26, p.254) sparkles despite the muddy-burnt superficial appearance.²³

In the light of this panoramic of the metamorphoses of the visiting-fallen angel-fish, it is now possible to return to 'L'angelo nero' and understand more clearly the

value of the images used within its text. 'L'angelo nero' contains in its images both the enormous fallen angel of darkness and the small angel-anguilla which has burnt in the chestnut roaster of the 'caldarrostaia' (v.23).²⁴ Throughout the poem, as a matter of fact, there is a continuous tendency to reduce the large angel of evil into the defenceless angel-anguilla who has been roasted and is, thus, 'di carbone' (v.22) and whose remainders are 'bruciaticcio' (v.33), 'cenere' (v.37) and 'fumo' (v.37). It is clear that the black angel is being described as the angel who can protect and should be adored:

O grande angelo nero
 fuliginoso riparami
 sotto le tue ali,
 che io possa sorradere
 i pettini dei pruni, le luminarie dei forni
 e inginocchiarmi
 sui tizzi spenti se mai
 vi resti qualche frangia
 delle tue penne.
 (vv.1-3)

It is an angel who may kill with her light ('non uccidermi col tuo fulgore', v.18) and whose nature and actions are incomprehensible, part of her divine nature:

o piccolo angelo buio,
 non celestiale né umano,
 angelo che traspari
 trascolorante difforme
 e multiforme, eguale
 e ineguale nel rapido lampeggio
 della tua incomprensibile fabulazione.
 (vv.10-16)

Structurally and syntactically, 'L'angelo nero' presents itself as a prayer divided into four stanzas and, like most prayers, contains vocatives, which establish the relationship and the contact between divinity and supplicant, attributes praising the divinity in order to obtain sympathy and good disposition, and imperatives through which the supplicant asks to have something granted. However, this prayer deviates from the standard prayer as each stanza of 'L'angelo nero' opens with a vocative ('O grande angelo nero', v.1; 'o piccolo angelo buio', v.10; 'o angelo nero disvélati', v.17; 'grande angelo d'ebano / angelo fosco', vv.24-25), thus each stanza tries to make contact with the divinity, as if the angel fails to respond to or to grant the poetic persona what is being asked for. As a matter of fact, only stanza one and three contain imperatives ('riparami', v.2; 'disvélati', v.17; 'non uccidermi', v.18), while stanza four is wholly constructed on a hypothetical sentence ('se ti prendessi un'ala', v.27) and ends with the clarification that the divinity can no longer grant what is asked for, because she has burnt down to ashes. It is clear that such an angel can no longer respond, though her ashes become relics which may still be adored 'che io possa [...] inginocchiarmi sui tizzi spenti' (vv.4-7). This means that the vocatives and the imperatives, which function as *origo* deictics, fail to establish contact between the angel and the poetic persona. Communication by prayer thus fails and the relationship between the angel and the poetic persona turns upside down: the angel is seen with pity as a being in need of protection ('angelo di carbone che ti ripari / dentro lo scialle della caldarrostaia', vv.22-23) and as tired of wandering around Orpheus-like with death as her only destiny. 'L'angelo nero', thus, shows the figure of the angel of salvation who wants to fall, who chooses mortality and death by

incineration, who finds in the 'scialle della caldarrostaia' (v.23) a rest, a place where it may assume a new identity as the Montalian 'lare' ('A Liuba che parte', v.4, p.123) no longer 'splendido' (*ibidem*, v.3, p.123), but covered in ashes: 'miniangelo / spazzacamino' (vv.37-38).²⁵ The angelo-'lare' can no longer be recognized as the supernatural angel of salvation of *Le occasioni* and *La bufera*, ('non potrei riconoscerti come faccio / nel sonno, nella veglia, nel mattino', vv.29-30), but it becomes a new 'portafortuna / che può reggere all'urto dei monsoni / sul fil di ragno della memoria' ('Piccolo testamento', vv.20-22, p.267) and which bring the Montalian voice back to his private 'orto', to his private memories and affections and his 'decenza quotidiana' which remain as the only available truths to hold on to in a reality-waste land where everything has decayed.

Thus, the great myth of the angel in Montale's poetry falls down to the mud, but is not completely dismissed, rather saved *in extremis* and kept by the poetic persona as one of his various luck-charms of which he seems to surround himself. 'L'angelo nero' as 'L'anguilla' and 'Il gallo cedrone', at the close of *Silvae*, represent

la vita sacrificata che *resiste* – sia pure in forma minimale, impercettibile, polverizzata (qui come "breve iride", "bronco seppellito", "bruco", "bruciaticcio", "grumo", "spolvero"...) – nelle ceneri che ne rimangono dopo il rogo, dopo il rituale arrostitimento' (Zambon, 1994, p.96).

It is thanks to these luck-charms that the Montalian voice can still survive in the mud, 'la nuova palta' ('Botta e risposta I', II, vv.36-37, p.278) or the 'blabla / dell'alta società' ('Non ho mai capito se io fossi', vv.5-6, p.285).²⁶

The figure of the angel has been seen to connect to all other angel figures of previous poems, thus completing the schema of the Montalian angel: such a thematic-metaphorical connection is emphasized by the definite article which appears in the title of this text. At the same time some of the other definite articles connect schemata which belong to the Montalian poetic discourse to the angel schema ('i pettini dei pruni', v.5; 'le luminarie dei forni', v.5; 'sui tizzi spenti', v.7; 'lo scialle della caldarrostaia', v.23; 'il bruciaticcio', v.33; 'il grumo', v.33; 'lo spolvero', v.35) bringing about the metaphorical death by incineration of the angel. The ashes left after the sacrifice, in 'L'angelo nero', are the product of ovens ('le luminarie dei forni', v.5) which is the corrupted version of the 'focolare' of 'A Liuba che parte' (v.2, p.123), and of many other texts (up until 'Il sogno del prigioniero', 'ma la paglia è oro, / la lanterna vinosa è focolare / se dormendo mi credo ai tuoi piedi', vv.8-10, p.268), and which remind the reader of the 'bruciaticcio / dei buccellati dai forni' (vv.24-25, p.268) and of the metaphor of the kitchen-*lager* of 'Il sogno del prigioniero'.

On analyzing 'L'angelo nero', it can be concluded that the presence of divergent metaphors which converge in this text shows continuity within disintegration of a poetic universe. 'L'angelo nero' turns out to be one of the poetic voice's 'amuleti' ('Dora Markus', v.25, p.125, my change) which seem to prolong some kind of hope within the 'nuova palta' of the rest of *Satura*.

7.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have defined the poetry of Montale's second season as 'poetry in the mud'. During the development of the chapter I have tried to show the double meaning of my definition: firstly that Montale's poetry from *Satura* stylistically shows to lower itself to the 'palta' of the decayed reality which Montale had already denounced in *La bufera e altro*. Poetry has no fear of coming down to the mud and of showing through its critical and parodistic accent its disintegration to babelish and degraded language which reflects a disintegrated and rotting reality-society where all that is official and respected turns out to be false and empty and where, by comparison, the private, the unofficial and the spontaneous acquire a value of truth. Thus, detachment from reality in search of a metaphysical salvation is no longer possible, as truth is found in the reality-mud of everyday life: the escape to the other side loses sense, as there is no other side, but only one 'palta' where time devours life.

On the other hand, in the last section of this chapter poetry in the mud has also acquired the meaning of continuation of hope in a wasteland of destruction and dehumanization of society. Poetry, which in 'La poesia' has been associated with uncontrollable and spontaneous outburst of words, may not offer answers to the meaning of man's life, but remains a powerful means of finding signs of authenticity amongst falsity, some rare 'iride breve' which can be seen to sparkle in the rot and which prolongs hope in the private, intimate dimension of one's own 'focolare' of dreams, memories and affections.

Notes

¹ The original title of Montale's fourth book (*Rete a strascico*) clarifies to the reader the nature of the coming together of the book, i.e. texts collected and put together like fish in a fishing net. The amended title, *Satura*, which appears next to the old title on the first page of the 'Fascicolo Forti', carries in its name more than one meaning all of which Montale wishes for the reader to keep in mind, except for one: 'Il titolo ha tre o quattro significati. Escluso quello di appetitosi *avantgoûts*, desidero che li mantenga tutti.' (See 'Autointervista', in *Sulla poesia*, p.599. See also *L'opera in versi*, 1980, p.2). Rebecca West adds that 'the word *Satura* indicates a mixed style and hints at the satirical element at play. In restoring the word to its Latin form the poet is separating his poetry from the Anglo-American tradition of *satire* [...] and emphasizing its true Roman origins. This is not to say that Montale limits his poetry in *Satura* to anything that can be called formal verse satire; rather he makes use of the lower key and often darkly comic voice made available by the satiric form' (1981, p.95). The various meanings which Montale refers to are 'satire', 'literary composition which presents texts of various subjects and styles' and also 'early form of Latin theatrical performance where a text was sung accompanied by music, dancing and miming'. See *Satura* in Battaglia (1961ff,XVII, p.602).

² Francesco Zambon (1994) has written a very interesting long essay on the exegesis of 'L'anguilla' as a central image and metaphor of death and re-birth within the 'romanzo montaliano'. Further mention of this work will be made in the following section of this chapter. On 'L'anguilla' see also A. Zanzotto (1953), S. Salvi (1966, pp.256-59), G. Orelli (1984, pp.79-94), R. Luperini (1992, pp.109-74).

³ Rebecca West stresses that the frequent presence of adjectives ending in '-ibile', '-abile' in *Satura* can be seen as a sign of the emptiness of the language there adopted by the poet in connection with the unbelievable emptiness of society associated with the unbelievable death of Mosca. Furthermore, on the prosaic nature of *Satura*'s adjectives (but, more generally, language) she notes: 'In the first poem of *Satura*, "Il tu" [...] Montale builds the rhyme of the poem around three past-participial adjectives: *depistati*, *moltiplicati*, and *duplicati* [...]. These are impoverished adjectives, pseudoadjectives, in that they derive directly from a verb and do not describe quality or quantity in the way in which most adjectives do. They are in brief prosaic adjectives' (West 1981, p.99). See also Grignani (1987, note 12, pp.100-1; and pp.139-68).

⁴ The presence of the divinity in Montale's poetry was charged with a highly biblical-Christian tension during the years of *La bufera e altro* and the charismatic figure of Clizia-Iride had assumed the role of a 'Cristofora', she who sacrifices herself to save the whole of humanity. In the poetry from *Satura* onwards God is described as more and more indifferent to man and his destiny: 'Dio' ('Due destini', v.2, p.515) becomes 'dio' ('Big bang o altro', v.7, p.531), and is referred to time after time as 'il croupier' ('La vita oscilla', v.16, p.597), 'il regista' ('Götterdämmerung', v.10, p.322), 'l'allenatore' ('Non mi stanco di dire al mio allenatore', v.1, p.448), and later as an unnamed entity. See É. Ó Ceallacháin, 1998, pp.143-54).

⁵ There is a clear contradiction between Montale's view of poetry that portrays the disintegrated reality from *Satura* onwards through a disintegrated and babelish language the only available to him, and Bakhtin's view of language as naturally polyphonic. For a study of heteroglossia in literary texts as a reflection of a fragmentary state of society see R. Fowler (1983, pp.91-108).

⁶ Although Clizia is portrayed as part of a superficial high society during the years of socio-political-historical general crisis in 'Botta e risposta I' (p.276) and 'Botta e risposta II' (p.346), in 'Botta e risposta III' (p.360) the poet gives her more depth and partially re-unites Clizia and the poetic voice ('ma è inutile perché / in questo mi rassomigli', vv.18-19, p.361) by re-uniting their languages from the metaphorical point of view. As a matter of fact Clizia uses metaphors included in the verb 'rifugiasti' (v.2, p.360) and 'straripare' (v.3, p.360) and the expression 'la pentola bolliva' (v.5, p.360) which denote a step down from her previous letters from Asolo and from Ascona where her main worry seemed to be connected to art and philosophy during years of socio-political-historical horrors. Clizia's language however keeps that elegant (even if worried) accent and never lowers itself down to the everyday, mean and vulgar reality as the poetic voice's does: 'contravvenzioni, / persecuzioni, manette' (vv.9-10, p.361), 'un'asfissia' (v.15, p.361), 'indovinati / ch'erano triglie e lo furono, / anche se marce' (vv.37-39, p.362), where the metaphors of the prison and that of the rotting food and stench are prolonged from 'Il sogno del prigioniero' and 'Botta e risposta I'.

⁷ For reasons of economy at the conclusion of this study on Montale's universe of poetry and its disintegration, my examination of heteroglossia in his language after 'Botta e risposta I' will be limited to *Satura* with some reference to later books.

⁸ The theme of bodily waste and *tout court* of the sewers in the 'secondo Montale' has been seen as connected to the poet's disgust for language and its inadequate capability to express the surrounding reality. West stresses that Montale's 'disgust with words is directly tied with his disgust with events, with what is commonly called history, which he sees as an unreadable, completely random, and essentially negative process of repetition, consumption and degradation: a cesspool' (1981, p.115). Montale associated poetry and the sewer in one of his poems, 'Quando si giunse al borgo del massacro nazista', 'La poesia e la fogna, due problemi / mai disgiunti (ma non te ne parlai)' (vv.16-17, p.388).

⁹ For further studies of *Xenia* (and more generally *Satura*) see Grignani (1987, pp.85-115), A. Rossi (1971, pp.3-20), M. Corti (1971, pp.217-36), O. Macrí (1971, pp.60-71), P. V. Mengaldo (1972, pp.15-43), Michelotto (1989, pp.101-17), Barbierato (1989, pp.67-99).

¹⁰ Mosca is mainly referred to affectionately as the short-sighted woman-insect who yet can see in the dark and beyond the 'blabla / dell'alta società' ('Non ho mai capito se io fossi', vv.5-6, p.285) the real emptiness of reality. She, like the previous angels, is, however, destined to fail ('Volavi poco quando, / catafratta di calce, affumicata / da una stufa a petrolio eri la preda', 'Gli ultimi spari', vv.5-7, p.339) and

to disappear ('Ho sceso, dandoti il braccio, almeno un milione di scale / e ora che non ci sei è il vuoto ad ogni gradino', 'Ho sceso, dandoti il braccio', vv.1-2, p.301). Her memories remain as a spiritual presence and guide through most of *Satura* and its rotting reality ('E neppure / t'importava la vita e le sue fiere / di vanità e ingordige e tanto meno le / cancrene universali', 'La morte non ti riguardava', vv.11-14, p.297).

¹¹ Reference to Mosca's personal objects is made also in other poems outside the *Xenia* collection, for example in 'La belle dame sans merci': 'reliquie / che non so: calendari, astucci, fiale e creme' (vv.7-8, p.344).

¹² Some of the examples of Mosca's authenticity set against the emptiness of the surrounding society are the following: 'Erano ingenui / quei furbi e non sapevano / di essere loro il tuo zimbello: / di essere visti anche al buio e smascherati' ('Non ho mai capito se io fossi', vv.6-9, p.285); 'di esser poi / ricacciato da te nel gradicante / limo dei neòteroi' ('Non hai mai pensato di lasciar traccia', vv.4-6, p.286); 'Ho sceso, dandoti il braccio, almeno un milione di scale / e ora che non ci sei è il vuoto ad ogni gradino' ('Ho sceso, dandoti il braccio, almeno un milione di scale', vv.1-2, p.301).

¹³ 'Mi abituerò a sentirti o a decifrarti / nel ticchettio della telescrivente' ('La tua parola così stenta e imprudente', vv.4-5, p.288); 'l'infilascarpe' ('L'abbiamo rimpianto a lungo l'infilascarpe', v.1, p.299); Celia's balbuzie ('una balbuzie / impediva anche lei', 'Riemersa da un'infinità di tempo', vv.9-10, p.307) and Mosca's father's old 'dagherròtipo' ('Ho appeso nella mia stanza il dagherròtipo / di tuo padre bambino', v.1, p.309).

¹⁴ For the meanings of 'confettare' in Italian, refer to *Lo Zingarelli* (1994, pp.423-24).

¹⁵ 'Che senso aveva quella nuova / palta? e il respirare altre ed eguali / zaffate? e il vorticare sopra zattere / di sterco? ed era sole quella sudicia / esca di scolaticcio sui fumaoli, / erano uomini forse, / veri uomini vivi / i formiconi degli approdi?', 'Botta e risposta I, II, vv.36-43, p.278); 'E ora tutto è cambiato, un formicaio / vale l'altro ma questo mi attira di più', 'Botta e risposta II', II, vv.17-18, p.347; 'Se potessi vedermi tu diresti / che nulla è di roccioso in questo butterato / sabbiume di policromi / estivanti', *ibidem*, II, vv.46-49, p.348; 'Ora / vivo dentro due chiese che si spappolano, / dissacrate da sempre, mercuriali', 'Botta e risposta III', II, vv.52-54, p.362).

¹⁶ Montale explains that 'gamella' is the 'mangiare quotidiano, la necessità di tutti i giorni'. See 'Commento a se stesso' in *Il secondo mestiere. Arte, musica, società*, 1996, p.1528.

¹⁷ It should also be noticed that such description are emphasized by the use of adjectives which belong to the English language ('stinking' and 'rotten') and which indicate the presence of foreign lexemes within Montale's text which clash with the rest of the lexis thus highlighting another aspect of the heteroglossic nature of his poetry.

¹⁸ The linguistic references which tie these pairs of texts are mainly referential deictics: 'tra gli uomini che non si voltano', ('Forse un mattino andando', v.8, p.40) and 'Gli uomini che si voltano' (p.376); 'se dormendo mi credo ai tuoi piedi' ('Il sogno del prigioniero', v.10, p.268) and 'Ai tuoi piedi' (p.579); 'amor di Chi la mosse e non di sé' ('Voce giunta con le folaghe', v.30, p.250) and 'dal suo Dio / ch'era lei stessa', ('Due destini', vv.2-3, p.515); 'Mezzo secolo fa / sono apparsi i cuttlefishbones' ('Mezzo secolo fa', vv.1-2, p.554) and the title of the collection *Ossi di seppia*. Despite the linguistic connection, on reading the two related poems, one realizes that the latter poem presents a situation which contradicts the situation of the former poem, thus revealing the later poem as the *verso* of the preceding one.

¹⁹ '[...] La poesia *Ribaltamento* [...] è il ricordo di un pauroso sogno (lui che cadeva nella vasca del giardino e poi salvato dal cuginetto) fatto a poco più di due anni. [...]' ('Montale secondo Montale', 1977, p.143). See the section 'Varianti e autocommenti', *L'opera in versi*, 1980, p.1133.

²⁰ Other examples of falling angels in *La bufera e altro* are the following: 'Giorno e notte', where the addressee is identified as a bird-angel who falls as she has been hit 'il colpo che t'arrossa / la gola e schianta l'ali, o perigliosa / annunziatrice dell'alba' (vv.14-16, p.201); 'Sulla colonna più alta' where, for the first time, she is referred to as a dark fallen angel, 'scura, l'ali ingrommate, stronche dai / geli dell'Antilibano' (vv.8-9, p.228), who, nevertheless, still has powers of salvation, 'e ancora / il tuo lampo mutava in vischio i neri / diademi degli sterpi' (vv.10-12, p.228) and 'L'orto', 'in fronti d'angiole / precipitate al volo' (vv.48-49, p.243).

²¹ With the text in inverted commas Zambon refers to the letter written to Bazlen on 9 June 1939 Montale explains that the 'Pesce' of 'Elegia di Pico Farnese' is 'uno dei più antichi segni cristiani' and adds that in his poem 'si esprime il dubbio che la simbologia cristiana (la foresta verde) dimezzi la vita e che Cristo abbia bisogno di essere continuato forse malgrè lui'. (See Zambon, 1994, p.67).

²² Francesco Zambon tracks back the origins of the eel by re-connecting it to two texts in particular: 'I limoni' (1922) collected in *Ossi di seppia* and 'Il bello viene dopo' (1950) collected in *La farfalla di Dinard*. The figure of the eel and its destiny to be roasted and therefore its connection to the rituals of food, is then followed by Zambon throughout Montale's first three books until 'L'anguilla' (1994, p.19-43). See also O'Neill (1991, pp.78-116).

²³ The descent and identification with the mud has been seen by Andrea Zanzotto as the destiny of the Montalian man and, tout court, of humanity and connecting Montale's poetry with the process of 'descensus ad Inferos' (1991, p.15) which characterizes the last two centuries of the European literature which tries to make contact with and understand (also scientifically), no matter what, the surrounding reality. 'Il destino umano è l'«interrarsi», il ridursi a sedimento, [...] è scoprirsi come vischiosa e dolorante inerzia. [...] Dannato per un'accidia cui si trova costretto, egli [l'uomo di Montale] continua a gorgogliare nella belletta il suo «inno»,

e il suo inferno è il ritrovarsi tra gusci, fanghiglie e frammenti di terra e di pietra in cui viene a risolversi la sua umanità' (Zanzotto, 1991, pp.19-20). 'L'anguilla' can be seen to represent the clearest example in *La bufera* of the 'mudding' of life.

²⁴ Zambon has underlined the close relationship between 'L'angelo nero' and 'L'anguilla'. See Zambon (1994, pp.87-103). Other studies on 'L'angelo nero' include Macrì (1996, pp.271-337).

²⁵ Rebecca West claims that 'self-protective gestures' are all that there is left for the fallen angel-poetry (see also the concluding poem 'L'altro' [p.407] of *Satura*) and for the poet who remains tied 'to a life and a poetry that have reached the truly marginal state neither of hope nor of despair but of endurance' (1981, p.112).

²⁶ The destiny of both the 'anguilla' and of the 'angelo nero' to fall to the mud can be seen to identify with the destiny of the poetic persona (and of Montale's poetry) who, from *Satura* raises its voice from a degraded reality and who in 'Botta e risposta I' turns into the 'topo' of the 'Stalle d'Augià'. As Zambon explains in his exegesis of 'L'anguilla' 'la "melma", i "fossi", il "fango" sono dunque i "correlativi oggettivi" di una realtà ormai degradata, ridotta a scoria e a detrito, a sedimento limaccioso. L'anguilla che vi si immerge è una poesia che intende rinunciare a ogni atteggiamento di superiorità e di distacco aristocratico dalla vita di tutti i giorni, una poesia che non teme di imbrattarsi nel fango della strada e che assume essa stessa una natura, per così dire, terrosa e melmosa' (1994, pp.115-16).

CONCLUSION

Although Montale's production has already been defined the poetry of dissolution by literary critics, the purpose of my thesis has been that of studying his poetry from the point of view of linguistics in order to explore further 'layers of meanings which can be peeled off' (Candlin 1975, p.viii) from his texts.¹ In this study of Montale's poetry the concept of dissolution has been explored in various areas: textual, thematic, semantic and syntactic dissolution of the single poem; dissolution of the poetic voice into echoes or multiple voices; disintegration of the language of a literary-poetic tradition into babelish everyday language which includes all fields of knowledge, experience and expression. All these are different aspects of the same phenomenon which is the main and most important dissolving factor: the crisis of the role of the poet and of his word in society throughout the twentieth century which is so clearly communicated in Montale's work. This has been suggested in various ways in the analyses of texts, contexts, poetic language and themes and has been expressed from the outset of his poetry by the metaphor of the enclosed garden where the poet must abide alone, his *turris eburnea* which is the only space reserved to him and where he remains an 'emarginato' ('La morte di Dio', v.11, p.319) from society.²

Rebecca West has offered various insights into the status of marginality of Montale's poetry (1981). In the same terms I indicate the linguistic dissolution of his worlds of poetry (which start dissolving as soon as they are created) and, indeed, of the role of poet, and thus his collocation on the margin between the full *ore rotundo* voice of the 'primo Montale' and silence (whatever is the meaning that one attaches to it: total communication or emptiness): the result is Montale's marginal language, his fragmented voice which 'si arricchisce di armoniche e le distribuisce nel corpo

della composizione' of his late poetic collections.³ The result is also his progressive disinterest in the search for the 'espressione assoluta' and the acceptance of the fragmentary and stuttering 'balbuzie' ('Riemersa da un'infinità di tempo, v. 9, p.307) with which the only possibility of knowledge is identified. The study of the refraction of one voice into many voices, of the disintegration of indirect speech (which entails the complete control of the narrating voice) into free direct and free indirect discourse, and the examination of Montale's highly heteroglossic language in *Satura* have shown that fragmentation is the reality of Montale's poems from *Satura* onwards. Another aspect of the dissolution to marginality of Montale's language is the disintegration of the poetry of the trilogy into the diary-like remarks of *Satura* and later books.⁴

What does this mean in real terms for Montale as a poet and for his poetry? If the poet is an 'emarginato' and the poetic word has lost its meaning and role in society, then, why does Montale keep writing? It is true that Montale's poetry changes deeply and acquires a prosaic sound after *La bufera e altro* and the ten-year silence which precedes *Satura*, but it is also true that Montale publishes three books (but writes five altogether) in the space of nineteen years between the publication of 'Botta e risposta I' and his death. From *Satura*, then, his production becomes surprisingly dense, as it had never been before. Mara Barbierato notes that

Montale ha [...] smesso di essere un pescatore 'di fino', un paziente e accorto professionista che lotta giorno e notte nell'attesa di un'anguilla, di un pesce rondine o di una trota. Il suo libro [*Satura*], la sua rete [a strascico], ha raschiato sul fondo, nelle ultime risorse del poeta, e ha portato alla luce ogni sorta di 'tartufi', 'il più puzzolente e il più raro.' (1989, p.88)

In a sense, round about the time when Montale declares he has little left to say as a poet (see 'La poesia non esiste', 'È ancora possibile la poesia?') he is writing the most. Montale indeed writes 'di getto', almost vomits poetry in this period of production: as Grignani explains in her essay ' "Satura": da miscellanea a libro' (1987, pp.117-37) 'con l'autunno del '68 il cantiere montaliano è in piena attività' (p.120).⁵

Montale has always believed in his role as a writer 'per un mondo migliore' ('Confessioni di scrittori', *Sulla poesia*, p.570) and despite his disillusionment with the outcome of the *dopoguerra* and his reactionary stance towards the 'progress' of society (which has been mentioned before in this work and has been well documented in literary criticism) he clearly perseveres in his role until the end. Poetry may no longer be possible or may not exist, after all, all that is left of it is a smell of 'bruciatuccio' ('L'angelo nero', v.33, p.379), a 'grumo che resta sui polpastrelli' (ibidem, vv.33-34, p.379), but that may be enough to save man from the mechanical and over-technological aspects of modern life. Poetry was presented by the poet as containing a soterial meaning as from *Ossi di seppia*. At the end of Montale's poetic *iter*, poetry even if marginal, remains 'una delle tante possibili positività della vita' (Montale, *Nel nostro tempo*, 1972, p.76). Jacomuzzi adds

la poesia, che non è 'lingua di Dio', non può certo salvare il mondo; non s'offre come sostituto e alibi di ogni altro intervento storico; ma può condurre il mondo, ora nell'inno ora nella balbuzie, ora nel positivo ora nel negativo, a riconoscersi e giudicarsi nel proprio linguaggio. (1978, p.132)

Despite the crisis of the artist (in this case of the poet) during the twentieth century and the dissolution of his role in society, Montale holds on to poetry until the end.

His poetry has changed but has not died and after many metamorphoses it is still recognizable as a sparkle in the mud which is close to extinction, but does not extinguish itself, because from a sparkle a flame can be kindled again. West concludes her book on Montale by noting that

for Montale, if poetry is still possible it is because it is born, lives, dies, and is born again through wars, great social, cultural and even spiritual upheavals, not as an essential issue or as a force for change and final revelation but, as 'essa è una entità di cui si sa assai poco'. (1981, p.154)

Thus the whole of Montale's *excursus* is to be seen as a life cycle: his poetry is born from *ossi di seppia*, i.e. all that is left of a cuttlefish which means that it originates from a previous death and dissolution, like a butterfly it breaks through its cocoon, it flies for a season and it falls again to the ground in order to die and decompose. And that is exactly the *iter* which has been followed linguistically, thematically and metaphorically in the development of this work. Dissolution is then written in the destiny of poetry (as is in the destiny of all that is human), but as matter it is never extinguished, it transforms itself into energy which is then ready to be turned once again into poetic matter.

Notes

¹ See Introduction to Widdowson (1975) by C. N. Candlin, pp.vii-viii.

² In 'Intervista immaginaria' Montale refers to the position of the poet on the margin of society: '[...] e ancora penso, che l'arte sia la forma di vita di chi veramente non vive: un compenso o un surrogato. Ciò peraltro non giustifica alcuna deliberata *turris eburnea*: un poeta non deve rinunciare alla vita. È la vita che si incarica di sfuggirgli' (*Sulla poesia*, p.562). In 'Confessioni di scrittori' he stresses once more that poets are a category of 'citizens' not often tolerated by society: 'Platone bandiva i poeti dalla Repubblica; in certi paesi di nostra conoscenza sono banditi i poeti che si occupano dei fatti loro (cioè della poesia) anziché dei fatti collettivi della loro società' (*Sulla poesia*, pp.570-71).

³ See Montale's interview with Maria Corti (1971, p.114). Although it is Montale himself who defines his first voice 'ore rotundo', if compared to other poets of the Italian tradition (Leopardi, Carducci or D'Annunzio, for example), his voice loses immediately the fullness which the poet attributes to it. As a matter of fact, from *Ossi di seppia* Montale's language is the product of his need to 'torcere il collo' to the eloquence of the Italian literary language 'anche a costo di una controeloquenza'. (See 'Intervista immaginaria', *Sulla poesia*, p.565) Montale's young poetic voice was influenced by the Ligurian poetic production of Roccatagliata, Sbarbaro, Boine (see Manacorda 1969, pp.11-24), however Mengaldo (1996, pp.163-262) has shown that Montale's poetic language is strongly rooted in the Italian literary tradition.

⁴ This aspect has not been analyzed in the present study, but some attention has been given to it by Mengaldo (1972 and 1977), West (1981), Grignani (1987) and others. Mengaldo (1977, p.134) explains that the analysis of the single poem had a sense up to the poetry of *La bufera e altro* due to the 'idea di chiusura e autosufficienza del testo' which the poems of the trilogy suggested. On the other hand he emphasizes that this is no longer possible with the poetry from *Satura* onwards and indicates that the only way to reach an exegesis of this new poetry is to interrelate the various 'pezzi' in order to reach a web of significance hidden behind the fragmentary presentation.

⁵ Grignani clarifies that a series of texts which are now collected in *Satura* were the products 'di cauta distillazione' (1987, p.120) amongst which the *Xenia* collections, 'Botta e risposta I' and 'Botta e risposta II', 'Ventaglio per S. F.', 'La belle dame sans merci' and a few others.

APPENDIX I

Translations of commented texts

'In limine' translated by Jonathan Galassi (1998, p.5)

ON THE THRESHOLD

*Be happy if the wind inside the orchard
carries back the tidal surge of life:
here, where a dead web
of memories sinks under,
was no garden, but a reliquary.*

*The whir you're hearing isn't flight,
but the stirring of the eternal womb;
watch this solitary strip of land
transform into a crucible.*

*There's fury over the sheer wall.
If you move forward you may come upon
the phantom who will save you:
histories are shaped here, deeds
the endgame of the future will dismantle.*

*Look for a flaw in the net that binds us
tight, burst through, break free!
Go, I've prayed for this for you—now my thirst
will be easy, my rancor less bitter...*

'Meriggiare pallido e assorto' translated by Jonathan Galassi (1998, p.41)

SIT THE NOON OUT

Sit the noon out, pale and lost in thought
beside a blistering garden wall,
hear, among the thorns and brambles,
snakes rustle, blackbirds catcall.

In the cracked earth or on the vetch,
watch the red ants' files
now breaking up, now meeting
on top of little piles.

Observe between branches the far-off
throb of sea-scales,
while cicadas' wavering screams
rise from the bald peaks.

And walking in the dazzling sun
feel with sad amazement
that all life and its torment
consists in following along a wall
with broken bottle shards imbedded in the top.

'Fuscello teso dal muro...' translated by Jonathan Galassi (1998, pp.35)

TWIG THAT JUTS FROM THE WALL

Twig that juts from the wall
 like the needle of a sundial
 scanning the sun's career
 and my brief one:
 you describe the twilights
 while you root in plaster
 the light imbues with fired
 reflections – and you're tired
 of the wheel your shadow leaves
 on the wall, unendingly bored
 with the dome that lifts a pale
 resemblance from you like smoke
 and bears down with its heavy
 aura that never dissolves.

But this morning you don't shadow
 what holds you anymore
 and a veil you stole last night
 from an unseen horde hangs at your tip,
 glistening in new light.
 Down below where the plain
 of the sea is revealed,
 a three-master ballasted
 with crew and booty lists
 at a breath and slips away.
 Those above who look out
 will see the deck gleams and the rudder
 leaves no wake in the water.

'I morti' translated by Jonathan Galassi (1998, pp.131-33)

THE DEAD

The sea that founders on the other shore
Sends up a cloud that foams until
the flats reabsorb it. There one day
onto the iron coast we heaved
our hope, more frantic than the ocean
-and the barren abyss turns green as in the days
that saw us among the living.

Now the north wind has calmed the muddied knot
of brackish currents and rerouted them
to where they started, someone hangs out nets
on the pruned branches-
faded nets that trail
onto the path that sinks from sight
and dry in the late, cold
touch of the light; and over them
the dense blue crystal blinks
and plunges to a curve of flayed
horizon.

More than seaweed sucked
into the seething being revealed to us, our life
is rousing from such torpor;
the part of us that stalled one day,
resigned to limits, rages; the heart flails
in the lines binding one branch
to another, like the water hen
bagged in the meshes;
and a cold deadlock holds us
static and drifting.

So, too, perhaps

the dead are denied all rest in the soil:
a power more ruthless than life itself
pulls them away and, all around,
drives them to these beaches,
shades gnawed by human memory,
breaths without body or voice
expelled from the dark;
and their broken flights,
still barely shorn from us, graze us
and in the sieve of the sea they drown...

'La casa dei doganieri' translated by Jonathan Galassi (1998, p.223)

THE HOUSE OF THE CUSTOMS MEN

You won't recall the house of the customs men
on the bluff that overhangs the reef:
it been waiting, empty, since the evening
your thoughts swarmed in
and hung there, nervously.

Sou'westers have lashed the old walls for years
and your laugh's not careless anymore:
the compass needle wanders crazily
and the dice no longer tell the score.
You don't remember: other times
assail your memory; a thread gets wound.

I hold one end still; but the house recedes
and the smokestained weathervane
spins pitiless up on the roof.
I hold on to an end; but you're alone,
not here, not breathing in the dark.

Oh the vanishing horizon line,
where the tanker's lights flash now and then!
Is the channel here? (The breakers
Still seethe against the cliff that drops away...)
You don't recall the house of this, my evening.
And I don't know who's going and who'll stay.

'Vasca' translated by Jonathan Galassi (1998, p.97)

POOL

A blooming belladonna smile
passed on the trembling glass,
clouds pressed between the branches,
their cottony pale billows
rose from below.

One of us skipped a stone
that broke the surface:
the soft appearances shattered.

But look, there's more than a streak
on the mirror that's newly sleek:
no way for it to break through,
it wants to live and doesn't know how;
watch and it drops, falls back where it came from:
it lived and died and never had a name.

'Carnevale di Gerti' translated by Jonathan Galassi (1998, pp.171-73)

GERTI'S CARNIVAL

If your wheel gets snared in tangled
 shooting stars and the stallion
 rears in the crowd, if a long
 shiver of pale confetti falls like snow
 on your hair and hands, or children raise
 their plaintive ocarinas to salute
 your passing, and faint echoes
 scale down from the bridge onto the river;
 if the street empties, leading you
 to a world blown inside a trembling bubble
 of air and light where the sun salutes your grace —
 it may be you've found the way,
 the avenue a piece of melted lead
 suggested for a moment on that midnight
 when a calm year ended without gunfire.

And now you want to stay on
 where a filter muffles the noise,
 distilling the bright and bitter mists
 that make up your tomorrow;
 now you want the land where onagers
 nuzzle sugar cubes in your hand
 and stunted trees sport magic seeds
 that sprout in the peacocks' beaks.

(Oh tonight your Carnival will be
 sadder still than mine, shut in as you are
 with your gifts for the missing:
 rosolio-colored wagons, puppets,
 harquebuses, rubber balls,
 Lilliputian kitchen tools:
 the urn assigned one to each absent friend
 the moment January was unmasked
 and the prophecy silently fulfilled.
 Is it Carnival, or still December?
 If you move the hands on the little watch
 you wear, I think that everything
 will run backwards, in a dissolving Babel-
 like prism of shapes and colors...).

And Christmas will come, and New Year's Day
 that empties the barracks and brings you
 your scattered friends, even this Carnival
 escaping now through these already cracking walls
 will come back, too.

Do you want to call a halt to time
 over the landscape that unfolds around you?
 Its great mottled wings are grazing you,
 the porches dangle living dolls —slender, blond—
 in the open air; the millwheel paddles
 churn on in the babbling ponds.
 Do you want to still the silver bells
 over the village, and the raucous
 cooing of the doves? Do you want
 the anxious mornings of your distant shores?

How everything turns strange and difficult,
 everything's impossible, you say.
 Your life is here below, where carriage wheels
 rumble ceaselessly and nothing
 adds up except, perhaps, in these
 derangings of what's possible. Return
 among the dead toys where death itself is denied;
 and with the time that beats at your wrist
 and gives you back to being, inside the heavy
 walls that won't open to the exhausted
 gorgon of humanity, come again
 to the street where I lament with you,
 the one a hardened piece of lead
 predicted for you evenings, and mine;
 come back to the springs that aren't flowering.

'Il fiore che ripete' translated by Jonathan Galassi (1998, p.207)

The flower that repeats
forget me not
from the rim of the ravine
has no colors happier or purer
than the space forced between me and you.

The creaking lets loose, pulling us apart,
the overweening blue won't reappear.
In haze you almost see, the cable car
takes me across, where it's already dark.

' "Pregava?". "Sì, pregava Sant' Antonio..." translated by Ghanshyam Singh (1976, p.6)

'Did She pray?' 'Yes, she prayed to St. Anthony
who helps one find lost umbrellas
and other things of St. Hermes' wardrobe.'
'Only for this?' 'Also for her dead
and for me.'
'It's enough', said the priest.

'Non sono mai stato certo di essere al mondo' translated by Ghanshyam Singh (1976, p.11)

'I have never been sure of being in the world.'
'You don't say,' you answered, 'and what
about me?'
'Oh the world, you have nibbled away at it,
if only in homeopathic doses. But I...'

'Voce giunta con le folaghe' translated by Jonathan Galassi (1998, pp.377-79)

VOICE THAT CAME WITH THE COOTS

Since the road traveled, if I look back, is longer
 than the goat-path bringing me
 to where we'll melt like wax,
 and not the flowering rushes but verbena,
 the blood of cemeteries, soothes the heart,
 here you are, Father, out of the dark that held you,
 upright in the glare,
 no shawl or beret,
 in the dull dawn rumble that announced
 the miner's barges, half-sank with their cargo,
 black on the high waves.

The shade that comes with me
 and stands watch at your grave,
 who sits on a herm and haughtily
 tosses her childish bangs
 freeing her burning eyes and severe brow-
 this shade weighs no more than yours
 interred so long;
 the day's first rays transfix her,
 lively butterflies dance through her,
 and the sensitive mimosa
 touches her and won't recoil.

The loyal shadow and the mute one
 Upright again; she whom an inner fire
 unbodied and the one long years out of time
 (years for me in my heaviness) have unfleshed,
 exchange words that I can't hear,
 stiff at the sidelines; perhaps the first
 will recover the form that burnt with love
 for Him who moved her, not self-love;
 but the other quails, afraid that the ghost
 of memory in which he is warm for his children
 will be lost in this new leap.

'I've thought for you, I've remembered
 for all. Now you return to that open
 sky that transmutes you. Does the cliff
 still tempt you? Yes, the high-water mark
 is the same as ever, the sea
 that linked you with my beaches before I had wings
 hasn't dissolved. I remember them,
 my shores, yet I've come with the coots
 to take you from yours.
 Memory is not sin while it avails.
 After, it's molelike torpor, misery

that mushrooms on itself..."

The wind of day
 melds the living shadow
 and the other, still reluctant one
 in an amalgam that repels my hands,
 and the breath breaks out of me at the swelling point,
 in the moat that surrounds the release of memory.
 So it reveals itself before attaching
 To images, or words, dark reminiscent
 Sense, the unlived-in void we occupied
 that waits for us until the time has come
 to fill itself with us, to find us again...

'Riflessi nell'acqua' translated by Ghanshyam Singh (1980, p.27)

REFLECTIONS IN THE WATER

Wear and tear cannot of necessity
obliterate our skin.
Suppressing which... but here the monologist
saw his reflection in the stream.
He saw his emanation there, disjointed
and distorted and eventually it disappeared.
A mere nothing is gone which was also
part of me, he said: the end can move
at a snail's pace. And thought of something else.

'Hamburger steak' translated by Ghanshyam Singh (1980, p.135)

HAMBURGER STEAK

The mincing machine is already in motion
babbled the escatologist in a fury; and then
in a lowered voice almost to console us:
let's hope its edge is not too sharp.

'Il sogno del prigioniero' translated by Jonathan Galassi (1998, pp.409-11)

THE PRISONER'S DREAM

Here few signs distinguish dawn from nights.

The zigzag of the starlings over the watchtowers
on battle days, my only wings,
a thread of polar air,
the head guard's eye at the peephole,
nuts cracking, fatty crackling
in the basements, roastings
real or imagined — but the straw is gold,
the wine-red lantern is hearth light,
if sleeping I can dream I'm at your feet.

The purge goes on as before, no reason given.
They say that he who recants and enlists
can survive this slaughtering of geese;
that he who upbraids himself, but betrays and sells
his fellow's hide grabs the ladel by the handle
instead of ending up in the pâté
destined for the pestilential Gods.

Slow-witted, sore
From my sharp pallet, I've become
the flight of the moth my sole
is turning into powder on the floor,
become the light's chameleon kimonos
hung out from towers at dawn.
I've smelled the scent of burning on the wind
From the cakes in the ovens,
I've looked around, I've conjured rainbows
shimmering on fields of spiderwebs
and petals on the trellises of bars,
I've stood, and fallen back
into the pit where a century's a minute —

and the blows keep coming and the footsteps,
and still I don't know if at the feast
I'll be stuffer or stuffing. The wait is long,
my dream of you isn't over.

'Botta e risposta I' translated by George Kay (1969, pp.119-21)

THRUST AND REPLY I

I

'Arsenio' (she writes to me), 'I "out to air" here
among the gloomy cypresses think that
it is time to suspend the so greatly
by-you-for-me-desired suspension
of every wordly delusion; that it is time
to spread the canvas and suspend
the act of suspending.

Do not say it is a bleak season and even the turtle doves
with the trembling wings have flown south.
I can no longer live on memories.
Rather the bite of ice than your sleepwalker
Lethargy, o late awakener.'

II

Hardly out of adolescence
I was thrown, for half my life,
into the Augean stables.

I did not find two thousand oxen here, nor
did I ever glimpse animals;
yet in the gangways, more and more thick
with dung, you walked stumblingly
and gasped for breath; but louder there
from day to day grew the bellowing of humans.

He Himself was never seen.
The mob however waited
for the presentat-arms; overcrammed chutes,
pitch-forks and spits, a fetid row
of beef olives. And yet
not once did He thrust up
point of cloak or tip of crown
above the ebony ramparts, excremental.

Then from year to year — and who went on counting
the seasons in the dark? — some hand
that tried invisible chinks

worked its memento through: a curl
 of Gerti's, a cricket in a cage, final mark
 of Liuba's passage, the microfilm
 of a euphuistic sonnet slipped
 from the fingers of Clizia's asleep,
 a clicking of wooden-sandals (the lame
 serving maid from Monghidoro)
 until from the cracks
 the fan of a sten gun threw us back,
 exhausted navvies caught red-handed
 by the constables of the slime.

And in the end came the thud: the unbelievable.

To free us, to swamp the intricate
 tunnels in a lake, cost only a moment
 to the twisted Alpheus. Who expected it
 now? What meaning had that new
 mire? and the breathing other, no different
 stench? and the swirling about upon
 turd rafts? and was that sun, that dirty
 sewer-grub upon the chimney pots?
 Were those perhaps men,
 true living men,
 the big ants on the landing-places?

. . .

(I suspect
 that you read me no longer. But now
 you know everything about me,
 about my prison and my after:
 now you know the eagle born of the mouse
 is not to be.)

'Caro piccolo insetto' translated by Ghanshyam Singh (1976, p.3)

Dear little Mosca,
 so they called you, I don't know why,
 this evening almost in the dark,
 while I was reading Deutero-Isaiah
 you reappeared beside me,
 but without your glasses,
 so that you could not see me,
 nor could I recognize you in the haze
 without that glitter.

'Avevamo studiato per l'aldilà' translated by Ghanshyam Singh (1976, p.4)

We had studied for the hereafter
 a token of recognition, a whistle;
 I'm now trying to modulate it in the hope
 that we're all already dead without knowing it.

'Dopo lunghe ricerche', by Ghanshyam Singh (1976, p.12)

After a long search
 I found you in a bar in Avenida
 da Libertade; you didn't know
 a word of Portuguese, or rather
 only one word: Madeira.
 And a glass of it arrived with shrimps.

In the evening I was compared to the greatest
 Lusitanians with unpronounceable names
 and to Carducci in addition.
 Not in the least impressed,
 I saw you crying for laughter, hidden
 in a crowd perhaps bored but reverent.

'Déconfiture non vuol dire che...' translated by William Arrowsmith (1998, p.37)

Déconfiture doesn't mean the crème caramel collapses on leaving the mold. It means a different kind of disaster; but for folk like us, unconfited, unchurched, disaster enough.

'La morte di Dio' translated by Ghanshyam Singh (1976, p.17)

THE DEATH OF GOD

All the religions of the only God
are one: just the cooks and the cooking vary.
I was musing on this and you
Interrupted me when you slipped vertiginously
down the winding stair of the Périgourdine
and split your sides with laughter.
It was a pleasant evening with just
a moment of fright. Even the Pope
said the same in Israel, but regretted it
when he was told that the great Abolished,
if ever there was one,
had expired.

'Il vinattiere ti versava...' translated by Ghanshyam Singh (1976, p.11)

The wine waiter poured for you a little
Inferno. And you, all fright: 'Must I drink it?
Isn't it enough to have been in it slowly burning?

'La poesia' translated by Ghanshyam Singh (1976, p.20)

POETRY

I

The agonizing question
whether inspiration comes in heat or cold
doesn't belong to thermal science.
The *raptus* doesn't produce,
nor does the void conduct,
there's no poetry in sherbet or on the roasting
spit. It's rather a question
of words which are quite pressing and
in a hurry to come out of
the oven or the freezer.
Facts don't count. No sooner
do the words come out than they look around
with the air of asking themselves:
what on earth are we here for?

II

With horror
poetry rejects
the commentators' notes. But it's not certain
that the too mute
is sufficient unto itself
or to the property man who has stumbled upon it
without knowing that he is
its author.

'Ribaltamento' translated by Ghanshyam Singh (1980, p.101)

OVERTURNING

The basin is a large circle in which
one can see nymphs and little pale pink fish.
I stretch out and fall into it, but
a child of my age raises the alarm.
Who knows if there's still water in it. I bend
my arm and touch the floor of my room.

'L'angelo nero' translated by Ghanshyam Singh (1976, pp.36-37)

THE BLACK ANGEL

O great fuliginous angel
shelter me
under your wings,
so that I may graze the spikes
of the thornbush, the illuminations of the ovens
and kneel down on the extinguished
embers in case some fringe
of your feathers may still be there

O little black angel,
neither celestial nor human,
who shines through changing colours
formless and multiform, equal
and unequal in the swift lightening
of your mysterious confabulation

O black angel unveil
yourself but do not kill me
with your splendour, nor dispel
the mist that haloes you, stamp
yourself on my thought, for no eye
can resist your dazzle,
coal-black angel who hides
under the shawl of the roast chestnut vendor

great ebony angel,
dark or white,
if being tired of my wanderings I
were to pull your wing and hear it
creak
I wouldn't be able to recognize you,
as I do now, in sleep, half-awake
in the morning, for between the true
and the false not one needle's eye
can hold the biped or the camel,
and the burnt residue, the grime
that remains on the fingertip is
less than the fine dust of your
last feather, great angel of ashes
and smoke, mini-angel chimney-sweep.

APPENDIX II

Published article: 'Lettura in limine di "La canna che dispiuma" e "Fuscello teso dal muro" di Eugenio Montale', *The Italianist*, 14 (1994), 111-32.

Lettura *in limine* di 'La canna che dispiuma' e di 'Fuscello teso dal muro' di Eugenio Montale*

Rossella Riccobono

1 Introduzione

Vorremmo prendere l'avvio dall'articolo di Margaret Brose 'The Spirit of the Sign: Oppositional Structures in Montale's "Ossi di Seppia"' per cercare di proporre una lettura *in limine* di due poesie montaliane: un mottetto, 'La canna che dispiuma', e una delle ultime liriche degli *Ossi di seppia*, 'Fuscello teso dal muro'.¹ Il primo testo verrà letto prendendo in considerazione parallelismi, reiterazioni, e opposizioni in figure semantiche e figure foniche. Al secondo testo, 'Fuscello teso dal muro', si applicherà una metodologia analoga per spiegare immagini di movimento reiterate e in opposizione tra di loro, e la presenza di uno o più intertesti all'origine del testo montaliano. In entrambi i casi lo scopo sarà anche quello di dimostrare i due seguenti punti: il testo poetico costituisce una fase liminale di passaggio da un tipo di spazio ad un altro attraverso una zona-*limen* distinguibile all'interno del testo stesso, ed è la scrittura poetica stessa a permettere questo passaggio. Nel suo articolo Margaret Brose suggerisce che la funzione dell'io-poetico montaliano è simile a quella dell'intermediario, dello sciamano, nell'operazione di passaggio del neofita da un'ordine all'altro dell'universo, nella fase di liminalità considerata dal punto di vista antropologico del *rite de passage*. Tenendo in mente queste affermazioni, e seguendo l'esempio di analisi testuale che la Brose ci ha dato della poesia 'In limine', in questo articolo vorremmo verificare come la funzione del poeta-sciamano si traduca linguisticamente e a che cosa corrisponda linguisticamente la fase della liminalità nel rito della poesia montaliana.

La Brose partiva dalla considerazione che la poesia è il fenomeno linguistico dove i principi jakobsoniani di *selezione* e *combinazione* nella composizione e nell'interpretazione del sistema poetico sono in posizione

preminente, e che i testi poetici prendono senso dal modo in cui il lettore sceglie e combina fra di loro, in strutture significative, i segni poetici.² Il testo poetico costituisce lo spazio linguistico in cui il lettore è chiamato in prima persona a ricombinare tra di loro i segni linguistici per trarne un messaggio e dove il lettore è pienamente partecipe del fenomeno poesia:

One of the consequences of the expansion of the axis of selection onto the axis of combination is that the principle of equivalence is promoted to the major constitutive device of syntactic construction: 'similarity and dissimilarity, synonymity and antonymity.' The syntagmatic axis is marked by a conspicuous patterning of similarity / dissimilarity features which appear on the phonemic, morphemic, grammatical and lexical levels of the poetic text. Any individual feature or sign is part of a reciprocal oppositive structure; it is perceivable only in relationship to something else. Our reading of the poetic text is, consequently, *antilinear* in nature. In fact, only the poetic function (of Jakobson's six functions) abrogates temporality; the poetic sequence is necessarily reversible and recombinational. Poetic meaning is generated by movement between equational pairs which grant – nay, compel – both metaleptic and proleptic reaggregation of the signs. (Brose, pp. 162-63)

Il linguaggio poetico, come rito della lingua, nasce allora da una serie di opposizioni all'interno del sistema linguistico che è di natura binaria, e ognuno dei lessemi o fonemi presenti richiama dei significati e delle connotazioni inerenti al proprio campo, ma allo stesso tempo richiama quei significati e quelle connotazioni di valore opposto che, pur essendo linguisticamente non attestate, agiscono *in absentia* al momento della fase associativa necessaria al lettore per ritrovare il significato del messaggio poetico. Oltre all'elemento di opposizione all'interno del sistema binario della lingua poetica, l'altra caratteristica del verso è l'elemento di reiterazione, anch'esso il risultato della proiezione del principio jakobsoniano di equivalenza: si possono reiterare figure lessicali, figure grammaticali, e figure di suoni. G. M. Hopkins il secolo scorso riconobbe che il significato in poesia è costruito in gran parte su ripetizioni e opposizioni,³ e Jakobson negli anni sessanta dimostrò con fonologica precisione che il parallelismo è il costituente fondamentale della struttura del verso. Gli elementi di parallelismo e di opposizione sono anche propri del fonema (coppie di opposti) che costituisce la base delle lingue naturali. Possiamo allora arrivare alla considerazione che come le nostre lingue, cioè

il nostro modo di comunicare e pensare, è basato su principi di reiterazione e di opposizione, così anche la poesia, come prodotto e rito della nostra lingua e, in senso lato, del nostro modo di essere e di vedere la realtà, comunica un significato a chi lo vuol cercare: un significato che va cercato ed estratto per opposto dal sistema binario di connotazioni e significanti che è la lingua poetica. Vediamo come la Brose intende debba avvenire questo tipo di lettura delle reiterazioni e delle opposizioni che generano significato a livello poetico:

What is the case for the distinctive features of the phoneme holds also, *mutatis mutandis*, for larger units of sound-meaning. Meaning is constituted, within the autotelic system of the poetic text, by means of oppositive sound relations. And while these sound patternings may be articulated sequentially, they are constituted as meaningful only when perceived within a system of phonic equivalence (similarity / dissimilarity). But how does the 'sound shape of language' generate meaning? Many scholars of poetics and linguistics have addressed themselves to this problem of late. In an issue of *Poetics Today* [...] Benjamin Hrushovski suggests that there is 'a two dimensional process' in all sound-meaning patterns: the semantic and the phonetic elements are transferred, or reinforced, from one to the other. Hrushovski describes this 'bidirectional transfer' as 'an asymmetrical relationship of two autonomous patterns, interacting through a certain *point of intersection*.' This point is to be seen, I suggest, as a threshold or juncture *in limine*. This transfer inscribes a pattern which I will call chiastic [...] and creates a new relationship between sound and meaning, 'not arbitrary but contextual, the meaning of which must be deduced from the context.' The actual semiosis of the poem is controlled by such reconstitutions of sound-meaning relations. (Brose, p. 165)

La Brose si riferisce ad un tipo di lettura defamiliarizzante. Anche la fase di liminalità del *rite de passage* si può intendere come un processo di defamiliarizzazione a cui partecipano lo sciamano e il neofita. La poesia verrebbe a coincidere con un fenomeno simile al processo del *rite de passage*; il significante prodotto dall'interazione di suoni e morfemi con la fase di liminalità: fase dove gli elementi si disgregano e si defamiliarizzano per poi riaggregarsi in nuovi significati. Questo approccio testuale alla poesia ha portato la Brose a risultati interessanti nello studio del linguaggio poetico montaliano dal punto di vista formale e semantico della poesia di apertura

degli *Ossi di seppia*, che non a caso è *in limine* al primo libro poetico e, di conseguenza, all'intera produzione poetica di Eugenio Montale. A nostro parere lo stesso metodo potrebbe essere applicato per lo studio degli spazi interni al testo poetico suggeriti alla nostra immaginazione dal valore semantico di elementi linguistici – quali l'uso del deittico, ecc. – e lo studio dell'intertestualità.

In questo articolo ci proponiamo di riprendere in parte il metodo usato dalla Brose nell'articolo già menzionato e di estenderlo per trarre nuove conclusioni sulla poetica montaliana. Ma prima di passare all'analisi dei testi scelti sarà necessario rifare una breve panoramica delle caratteristiche e dei fini della poetica montaliana per introdurre alcuni degli argomenti che toccheremo in questo articolo.

2 *Poesis e gnosis: alcuni spunti sulla poetica montaliana*

La poesia di Eugenio Montale presenta, sin dagli anni degli *Ossi di seppia*, una problematica di tipo prettamente filosofico: la ricerca della verità al di là della concezione spazio-temporale, del mondo in cui l'uomo è costretto a vivere e che il poeta sente come claustrofobico e, soprattutto, come mera proiezione della nostra psiche e della nostra memoria: un 'universo fittizio'.⁴ La memoria costituisce il luogo dove si depositano i ricordi del passato di una persona e, quindi, la sua identità; la memoria costituisce, allora, l'unico caposaldo che permette al poeta di non perdere il senso dell'esistenza.⁵ Sappiamo però che all'io narrante montaliano manca esattamente il senso dell'esistenza: 'Sensi non ho, né senso' ('Potessi almeno costringere', v. 24), e anche l'appiglio della memoria gli viene meno nelle liriche delle *Occasioni* ('La casa dei doganieri', 'Non recidere, forbice, quel volto'). Resta viva però la ricerca fedele di qualcosa che possa aprire un varco alla sete di conoscenza o alla possibilità della fuga dalla contingenza dell'universo spazio-temporale, il 'male' o il 'necessario', verso ciò che Montale stesso definisce con il nome di 'miracolo' o 'non-necessario' ('Crisalide'):

d'una fede che fu combattuta
d'una speranza che bruciò più lenta
di un duro ceppo nel focolare
(*'Piccolo testamento'*, vv. 10-12)⁶

Montale non può e non vuole uscire dalla dimensione spazio-temporale poichè nemmeno la dimensione oltre il 'varco' lo porterebbe al

‘miracolo’ che egli cerca. Le distanze tra il ‘male’ e il ‘miracolo’ sembrano accorciarsi notevolmente se il ‘miracolo’ non lo si dovrà cercare in una dimensione oltre il ‘varco’, che verrà piuttosto a combaciare con il ‘vuoto’, il ‘nulla’, l’‘informe’, ma nella dimensione di liminalità e più precisamente nella scrittura poetica. Non vogliamo, con questo, suggerire che la posizione montaliana nei confronti della poesia sia di tipo consolatorio, ma piuttosto di carattere filosofico, di mezzo per poter imparare a leggere la realtà. Insomma nella poetica di Montale *poesis* è anche *gnosis*.

It should be stressed, however, that Montale's *gnosis* contains no intimations of any knowledge of origins or ends. It is a knowledge only of a desiccated present. Nor is there any supportive ritualization of the instructive process: Montale's liminality is terrifyingly random, accidental, aleatory. The ground beyond or below a distracted 'present' is characterized as an equally distracted or disturbed Divinity, an oxymoronic phrase that is typical of the clouding of those meager epiphanies that the poem proffers us. In most cases, the epiphany is as puzzling as the obscurity it promises to clarify. The signs are not read, the moment fades. (Brose, p. 160)

La funzione della poesia montaliana sembra essere innanzitutto quella di procurare al lettore-neofita l'occasione e i mezzi per la lettura della realtà, di indicare la strada al ‘varco’ tramite la fase di liminalità, o di passaggio attraverso il testo poetico stesso. La lettura della realtà non è comunque sempre possibile e la ricerca del ‘miracolo’ sembra essere meno promettente di quanto l’io montaliano si augurasse.

Vediamo allora di procedere con la lettura della ‘Canna che dispiuma’ per osservare come funziona il testo poetico dal punto di vista formale nell’operazione del *rite de passage*, o della lettura della realtà.

3 ‘La canna che dispiuma’: parallelismi, reiterazioni e opposizioni

- 1 La canna che dispiuma
- 2 mollemente il suo rosso
- 3 flabello a primavera,
- 4 la rèdola nel fosso, su la nera
- 5 correntia sorvolata di libellule;
- 6 e il cane trafelato che rincasa
- 7 col suo fardello in bocca,

- 8 oggi qui non mi tocca riconoscere;
 9 ma là dove il riverbero più cuoce
 10 e il nuvolo s'abbassa, oltre le sue
 11 pupille ormai remote, solo due
 12 fasci di luce in croce.
 13 E il tempo passa.

Abbiamo detto che Montale non può aderire alla realtà esistenziale poichè limitante, poichè è solo proiezione della psiche, e che di conseguenza ricerca quei segnali nella realtà che indicano la possibilità di un'uscita dalla gabbia spazio-temporale, quelle manifestazioni che egli chiama il 'non-necessario' o il 'miracolo'. Allo stesso tempo, però, lo spazio conosciuto offre una sicurezza e familiarità, al contrario del 'miracolo' che apre le porte all'incognito. È una situazione di circolo vizioso: si ricerca il 'non-necessario' ma non si vuole abbandonare il 'necessario'. In questo mottetto ci si trova dinanzi a due dimensioni spazio-temporali ben diverse: una caratterizzata da immagini familiari e rassicuranti, l'altra da immagini quasi surreali. Partendo dalla struttura formale del linguaggio del mottetto, osserviamo innanzitutto che la poesia è organizzata in due momenti diversi: nella prima parte, in particolare, notiamo la presenza di quattro versi settenari dei quali tre in posizione di apertura del testo e uno in posizione di chiusura; nella seconda parte (interamente formata da endecasillabi) sottolineiamo la struttura dell'ultimo endecasillabo spezzato in un settenario e in un quinario. Si tratta di una struttura ad opposizione di due tipi di versi.

Prendendo in considerazione le rime e le assonanze, vediamo che in molti dei casi quando due lessemi sono accomunati da un legame di assonanza o rimico, appartengono a due campi semantici diversi e, a volte, totalmente opposti. 'Dispiuma' (v. 1) trova un'assonanza imperfetta in 'primavera' (v. 3).⁷ Ora 'dispiumare' è un'azione negativa, indica la perdita delle piume o, in senso più generale, la perdita anche delle foglie ed è legata semanticamente più all'autunno che alla primavera, perciò direi che 'dispiuma' e 'primavera' sono opposti dal punto di vista semantico, ma accomunati da una assonanza (*dispiuma* / *primavera*). A sua volta 'primavera' rima con 'nera' (v. 4): unite dall'elemento di rima 'primavera' e 'nera' sono divise più che mai dal significato, ma questo non ci stupisce poi molto se pensiamo ad altre occasioni in cui Montale ha descritto la primavera con aggettivi come 'oscura': 'E fa l'oscura primavera / di sottoripa' ('Lo sai debbo riperderti e non posso', vv. 5-6) o il 'mezzodi' come

un'ora segnata da ombre: 'Mezzodì: allunga nel riquadro il nespolo / l'ombra nera' ('Ti libero la fronte dai ghiaccioli', vv. 5-6).

Si comincia a intravedere il gioco linguistico della poesia montaliana. I valori tradizionali vengono disgregati e poi riaggregati con nuovi significati. Questo elemento di defamiliarizzazione e di sorpresa è caratteristica fondamentale del testo letterario e, in particolar modo, della poesia. Ma continuiamo con l'analisi del mottetto per corroborare queste prime affermazioni. L'aggettivo 'rosso' (v. 2) crea una rima interna con 'fosso' (v. 4). Ancora una volta le due parole sono semanticamente opposte: il colore rosso è il colore regale per eccellenza e soprattutto il 'suo rosso / flabello' crea una metafora quasi papale, di lusso e di splendore. Il termine 'fosso' connota un luogo tutt'altro che regale. Il linguaggio poetico montaliano nasce dal cozzo di parole appartenenti a registri stilistici opposti, il sublime e il quotidiano. Montale sembra avvicinarsi allo stile linguistico di un Gozzano di cui aveva affermato: '[Gozzano] infallibile nella scelta delle parole [fu] il primo che abbia dato scintille facendo cozzare l'aulico col prosaico'. E ancora: '[Gozzano] fondò la sua poesia sullo choc che nasce fra una materia psicologicamente povera, frusta, apparentemente adatta ai soli toni minori, e una sostanza verbale ricca, gioiosa, estremamente compiaciuta di sé'.⁸ Mentre Gozzano era troppo preoccupato di scrivere in uno stile che si contrapponesse in tutto e per tutto alla pomposità dello stile dannunziano, di opporre alla dottrina del superuomo la lezione del quotidiano crepuscolare, Montale è interessato ad ampliare il discorso del linguaggio gozzaniano con fini filosofico-poetici. È anche vero, però, ed è già stato discusso soddisfacentemente da Mengaldo, che il linguaggio montaliano ha un debito non irrilevante con la lingua poetica dannunziana.⁹

Così, nuovamente, 'flabello', che appartiene allo stile aulico, è accomunato da assonanza a 'libellule' (v. 5) (*flabello / libellule*), il nome di un insetto che abita zone paludose, o comunque, di acqua quasi stagnante (stagni e fossi appunto), e più in là a 'fardello' (v. 7) (*flabello / fardello*) da rima interna. 'Fardello' semanticamente è di connotazione negativa poichè si riferisce, in genere, ad un peso che si deve sopportare, ma in questo contesto assume un valore positivo poichè il 'fardello in bocca' è probabilmente il cibo che il cane si è procurato con fatica e con il quale rincasa. 'Fardello' assume un valore semantico bipolare. 'Sorvolata' (v. 5) crea una rima interna imperfetta con 'trafelato' (v. 6), seppure i termini semanticamente siano di valore molto diverso: 'sorvolata' dà l'idea di qualcosa di leggero, appunto il volo delle 'libellule', che diviene ora di valore

positivo assumendo, così, un valore semantico bipolare; 'trafelato' invece vuol dire spossato, ansimante.¹⁰

Infine 'bocca' (v. 7) trova un elemento di rima perfetta in 'tocca' (v. 8) nella strofe successiva, lasciando così 'rincasa' (v. 6) l'unica parola di fine verso senza legami di rima o di assonanza con nessun'altra parola, almeno all'interno della prima strofe. Si nota però un legame tra 'rincasa' e 'abbassa' (v. 10) e 'passa' (v. 13) che potremmo definire un legame di assonanza ('rincasa', 'abbassa' e 'passa'), ma un'assonanza resa più salda data la presenza di due consonanti sibilanti intravocaliche che definirei opposte: -asa (/z/ sibilante sonora) e -assa (/s/ sibilante sorda). Il termine 'rincasa' sarebbe perciò attratto per opposizione fonemica agli altri due termini 'abbassa' e 'passa', legati a loro volta tra di loro da una rima perfetta. La prima parte del mottetto presenta una costruzione linguistica duale sia per l'alternanza di versi settenari e endecasillabi (si noti che i settenari sono presenti solo nella prima parte, mentre nella seconda parte si trovano solo endecasillabi: l'unico settenario lo si trova completato da un quinario per formare l'endecasillabo finale), sia per la disposizione in rime e assonanze di termini con valori semantici opposti. Le immagini create dalla lingua poetica sono del tutto familiari malgrado le osservazioni fatte sulla struttura della strofe. Immagini che però non vengono riconosciute dall'io poetico in questa particolare occasione. La seconda parte della poesia ci introduce nell'occasione da cui si plasma la lirica e precisamente in un *ora* e in un *qui*: 'oggi qui non mi tocca riconoscere'. Le immagini familiari introdotte nella prima parte vengono improvvisamente annientate e il loro valore quotidiano e, diremo, rassicurante, viene a mancare all'io poetico. Ci si ritrova in una nuova dimensione spaesante dove l'azione del riconoscere, della memoria, è annullata. Potremmo, in un certo senso, avere attraversato il 'varco', o trovarci, più precisamente, nella zona di liminalità. Osserviamo i tratti linguistici di questa seconda parte del mottetto e cerchiamo di delineare delle conclusioni, seppur provvisorie.

Il verso 8 è topograficamente il primo verso della seconda parte della lirica ma, sia semanticamente che per motivi di punteggiatura, appartiene alla prima strofe. Ci sembra che la ragione di questo sia il fatto che il poeta abbia voluto creare una sorpresa, un'impressione di non-familiarità sul lettore; il poeta vuole, insomma, fare capire al lettore che l'*hic* e il *nunc* della situazione sono ora completamente diversi dai corrispettivi della dimensione familiare creata dalle tre immagini precedenti: di qui il disorientamento del lettore. All'interno di questa nuova dimensione di *hic* e di *nunc* si delinea presto una nuova dualità, il 'qui' (v. 8) e il 'là' (v. 9). Dove si trovi il 'qui' e

a che cosa si riferisca il 'là' cercheremo ora di precisarlo. Abbiamo già notato che tutti i versi di questa seconda parte sono endecasillabi (sdruciolli o piani) a parte l'ultimo che è formato da un verso settenario e un quinario, dove il quinario è dislocato di un verso più in basso, ma, sia per continuità di ritmo e respiro che per posizione topografica, deve essere letto come completamento del settenario. Analizziamo ora il ricorrere di rime, di assonanze e di legami fonemici in questa seconda strofe. 'Riconoscere' (v. 8) è accomunato dalla ripetizione del fonema (-sc-) a 'fasci' (v. 12). Non sembrano esserci rapporti semantici tra le due parole. Avevamo visto che nella prima strofe tutte le parole in rima o accomunate da assonanza o collegate tra di loro in qualche modo formale erano di valore semantico opposto. Questo non accade nella seconda strofe. 'Cuoce' (v. 9) rima con 'croce' (v. 12) e si lega in assonanza anche a 'luce' (v. 12). In particolare 'luce' e 'croce' creano una forte immagine fonica (-uce / -oce) e visiva. I 'due / fasci di luce in croce' creano per il lettore un'immagine quasi di messaggio divino, o di alleanza divina, un'immagine di sapore biblico. 'Abbassa' (v. 10) rima con 'passa' (v. 13). Si potrebbe dire che entrambi i verbi indicano un movimento con una direzione: 'abbassa' descrive un movimento dall'alto al basso nello spazio mentre 'passa', riferito al passare del tempo, descrive un movimento dall'oggi al domani, dal passato al presente al futuro, una direzione nel tempo.¹¹ I due verbi appartengono, allora, al campo semantico del movimento con una direzione, ma in relazione a due grandezze diverse: spazio e tempo. Spazio e tempo sono le due componenti della realtà a cui Montale cerca di sfuggire: la gabbia spazio-temporale. 'Sue' (v. 10) si lega in rima baciata con 'due' (v. 11) e ancora una volta l'aggettivo possessivo 'sue' riferendosi a 'pupille', non può che legarsi anche semanticamente a 'due'. Infine 'pupille' (v. 11) si ricollega a 'fardello' (v. 7), 'libellule' (v. 5) e 'flabello' (v. 3), non solo per assonanza (*fardello / flabello*) (*pupille / libellule*), ma anche perchè sia le 'pupille' che il 'fardello', le 'libellule' e il 'flabello' sono ormai remoti dalla dimensione dove l'io si trova in questa seconda parte.

Vorremmo azzardare una conclusione, ad analisi fatta. Abbiamo dunque detto che la seconda parte del mottetto trasporta il lettore in una nuova dimensione precisata da un *hic* e un *nunc*. Abbiamo anche visto che non esiste una discrepanza dal punto di vista formale all'interno della struttura linguistica. L'unica dualità è creata dall'opposizione di un 'qui' a un 'là'. Vorremmo suggerire che il 'qui' si riferisce ad una zona di prossimità al *limine* e che il 'là' viene a coincidere esattamente con il *limine*, il 'varco', la zona di tensione e smaterializzazione dove si può scorgere il segno, il

fantasma di colui o colei che può compiere il passaggio, i segni lasciati dal neofita nell'operazione di passaggio. Le 'pupille ormai remote' sono quelle di chi ha varcato la soglia e il cui passaggio attraverso la soglia lascia un 'riverbero', i 'fasci di luce in croce', ultimo segno visibile a chi non può compiere tale passaggio. Al poeta, allo sciamano, che ha reso possibile questo passaggio poichè autore del rito-poesia tramite cui il neofita impara a interpretare la realtà, non è concesso di trapassare il *limine* poichè la sua funzione è quella di guidare il neofita, il 'tu' (il lettore?), a questo 'varco', quella di permettere al neofita la lettura vera della realtà circostante, dei simboli tramite l'uso degli oggetti sacri. Nel caso montaliano, e della poesia in generale, gli oggetti sacri sono le parole, la poesia come rito, come genere letterario dove i significati si combinano tra di loro, si smaterializzano per poi ricombinarsi in significati nuovi. L'esperienza del 'varco' e del 'miracolo' è, in fin dei conti, l'esperienza della poesia come linguaggio limite dopo di che si arriverebbe forse alla pagina bianca (ma la pagina bianca non avrebbe senso poichè annullerebbe il significato del linguaggio come comunicazione). Al dualismo riconosciuto della realtà umana associamo il dualismo formale e semantico della prima parte del mottetto. Ma in prossimità del *limine* e nella zona di liminalità stessa questa dualità cessa di essere; in queste zone ciò che è diviso lo si impara a leggere come unito e unico, gli elementi in contrasto entrano in armonia e lo schermo delle proiezioni psichiche non ha più ragione di essere. Tutto questo è però interdetto al poeta che può solo pregare perchè si possa attuare la salvezza del neofita: 'Va, per te l'ho pregato, – ora la sete / mi sarà lieve, meno acre la ruggine' ('In limine', vv. 17-18). La 'sete' è forse la sete di conoscenza mai soddisfatta per il poeta-sciamano.

L'ultimo punto che vorremmo precisare è la struttura dell'ultimo endecasillabo del mottetto in connessione al suo valore semantico:

[...] solo due
fasci di luce in croce.

E il tempo passa.

Vogliamo chiarire perchè 'E il tempo passa' sia stato dislocato di un verso più in basso e esattamente a continuazione del verso precedente. I due versi come somma di un settenario e di un quinario e per la posizione topografica del verso 13 come continuazione del verso 12 costituiscono un endecasillabo piano e vanno letti nello spazio dello stesso respiro.¹² I due versi, benchè siano divisi dalla punteggiatura e dalla dislocazione spaziale, sono contemporaneamente uniti. I 'fasci di luce in croce' sono il segnale del

passaggio del neofita attraverso il *limine*; 'E il tempo passa' sembra essere un imprevisto riaggancio con la realtà spazio-temporale. Ora vorremmo suggerire che queste due realtà, apparentemente divise, in prossimità della zona *limine* non lo sono più, ma coesistono in armonia. Le due realtà sono spazialmente divise in apparenza (per dislocazione topografica) ma unite dal respiro del verso nella lettura. E come la parola 'fardello' (v. 7) portava con sè un valore semantico bivalente (dopotutto la sua posizione è quasi in prossimità del 'varco', e comunque subito prima dello spazio bianco [possibile varco poetico] che separa la prima dalla seconda parte del mottetto), così un segno di oltre-varco (i 'fasci di luce in croce') e il 'tempo' come componente della realtà a cui l'io poetico non può sfuggire, possono coesistere in *limine* senza soluzione di continuità.

4 'Fuscello teso dal muro': la ricerca dell'intertesto

Vogliamo ora prendere in considerazione un altro esempio di testo poetico come scrittura *in limine* dal punto di vista della presenza di un intertesto. Vogliamo, insomma, vedere se l'intertesto sia recuperabile come componente del fenomeno poesia vista come sistema linguistico binario e se si possa anche collegarlo alla tematica del dualismo dell'universo montaliano. Prendiamo dunque in considerazione 'Fuscello teso dal muro'.

- 1 Fuscello teso dal muro
- 2 sì come l'indice d'una
- 3 meridiana che scande la carriera
- 4 del sole e la mia, breve;
- 5 in una additi i crepuscoli
- 6 e alleghi sul tonaco
- 7 che imbeve la luce d'accesi
- 8 riflessi – e t'attedia la ruota
- 9 che in ombra sul piano dispieghi,
- 10 t'è noja infinita la volta
- 11 che stacca da te una smarrita
- 12 sembianza come di fumo
- 13 e grava con l'infittita
- 14 sua cupola mai dissolta.
- 15 Ma tu non adombri stamane
- 16 più il tuo sostegno ed un velo

- 17 che nella notte hai strappato
 18 a un'orda invisibile pende
 19 dalla tua cima e risplende
 20 ai primi raggi. Laggiù,
 21 dove la piana si scopre
 22 del mare, un trealberi carico
 23 di ciurma e di preda reclina
 24 il bordo a uno spiro, e via scivola.
 25 Chi è in alto e s'affaccia s'avvede
 26 che brilla la tolda e il timone
 27 nell'acqua non scava una traccia.

La poesia è divisa in due parti in apparente contraddizione (la seconda parte è introdotta da 'Ma') e la tematica è quella del tempo, dello scacco che il tempo dà all'io poetico e, in generale, a tutto ciò che esiste: dal sole al 'fuscello' stesso. Protagonista della poesia è appunto il fuscello-meridiana nell'atto di scandire il tempo. Si tratta di un'azione che 'attedia' il fuscello perchè ripetitiva e infinita, e che, allo stesso tempo, lo rende responsabile, non tanto dell'inevitabile passare del tempo, ma del ricordare, del registrare questo passaggio. Il fuscello è protagonista ma anche interlocutore; infatti dal punto di vista narrativo, l'io poetico si rivolge al fuscello ricordandogli la sua funzione di strumento del tempo e provocando, forse in parte, la crisi della seconda strofe dove il tempo sembra venga annullato.

La seconda strofe è introdotta da 'Ma', e il verso 15 da solo sembra in grado di poter negare per intero tutto il valore della prima strofe: 'ma tu non adombri stamane'. 'Stamane', inoltre, precisa un momento particolare rispetto al passaggio del tempo inarrestabile e sempre uguale. 'Ma tu non adombri stamane' connota il passaggio a una dimensione nuova dove il fuscello ha cessato di proiettare un'ombra, dove il tempo non è più necessario per dare un senso all'esistenza. Si è passati ad una dimensione oltre il tempo e l'unico segnale testimone di questo passaggio è il velo che pende dal fuscello. Al verso 20 troviamo una connotazione spaziale: 'laggiù'. Al *nunc* della nuova dimensione si aggiunge una dislocazione spaziale 'laggiù' che si differenzia *in absentia* dall'*hic* non menzionato. Il 'laggiù' nella struttura formale della poesia appartiene al verso 20 per posizione topografica, ma, per motivi di punteggiatura, semantici e stilistici (*enjambement*), è legato direttamente al verso 21. L'avverbio spaziale 'laggiù' viene allora a trovarsi in posizione formale intermedia tra lo spazio occupato dall'immagine del fuscello e quello occupato dall'immagine del

trealberi così, semanticamente, l'*hic* della nuova dimensione si differenzia dalla dislocazione spaziale 'laggiù' ma, nel contempo, i due spazi si fondono l'uno nell'altro. Si tratta di un 'laggiù' che ha valore di 'laggiù' e di 'qui' allo stesso tempo o, meglio, di uno sdoppiamento del valore di 'laggiù' e di una fusione, nel contempo, del 'qui' e del 'lì'.

Vorrei ipotizzare, come abbiamo fatto in precedenza per 'La canna che dispiuma', che nella seconda parte della poesia siamo entrati in una zona di liminalità tra la dimensione spazio-temporale esistenziale e l'oltre-varco, dove la dimensione esistenziale era quella descritta nella prima strofe della poesia e la dimensione oltre-varco inizia dal 'laggiù' al verso 20 e conclude la poesia. La zona *limine* sarebbe, insomma, lo spazio di versi 15-20 divisa e unita, allo stesso tempo, alla zona di oltre-varco, dalla dislocazione spaziale 'laggiù'. Questo sottolineerebbe un'imprecisione del confine tra la zona *limine* e la zona oltre-varco. Vediamo di dimostrare questa ipotesi dal punto di vista della presenza di uno o più intertesti all'interno della poesia e del valore semantico dei vocaboli scelti dal poeta.

La tematica di fondo della prima parte della poesia è quella del passare del tempo e della finitezza della natura umana se paragonata all'infinito trascorrere del tempo dove i rispettivi termini di paragone si identificano con il binomio io-poetico – sole: 'che scande la carriera / del sole e la mia breve' (vv. 3-4). Dal punto di vista del vocabolario si può notare un numero alto di verbi e di vocaboli semanticamente collegati al passaggio del tempo. Innanzitutto, il fuscello viene paragonato all'"indice d'una / meridiana", cioè ad uno strumento di lettura del tempo. I verbi 'indicare' (da cui 'indice' al v. 2), 'scandire' e 'additare' appartengono tutti allo stesso campo semantico: in questo caso il campo semantico della lettura del tempo. Anche 'carriera' (v. 3) è qui sinonimo di passaggio. Poi nuovamente il verbo 'dispiegare' (v. 9) si riferisce ancora al passaggio del tempo metaforizzato dalla ruota creata dall'ombra dell'"indice" della 'meridiana'. Dal punto di vista della punteggiatura direi che si tratta di un vero e proprio paragone di opposti se si nota che, quasi esattamente a metà, il poeta ha voluto porre un trattino come tra due termini di paragone: finito-infinito, natura umana-cosmo. Al finito corrisponderebbero i primi sette versi (incluso 'riflessi' posto al verso 8 per *enjambement*), e al termine infinito gli ultimi sette versi. In aggiunta alla tematica del finito-infinito, il motivo di fondo è la noia del vivere e del continuo trascorrere e del tornare a trascorrere del tempo sempre e esattamente allo stesso modo e senza un valore finale. Le immagini create in questa prima parte della poesia ben riflettono questo tedio. Innanzitutto il fuscello-meridiana nella sua funzione di registrare il tempo è legato

infinitamente a tale funzione e a proiettare la sua ombra sempre nello stesso modo, dispiegando una ruota da occidente a oriente. Si tratta di un movimento rotatorio a cui non si può sfuggire: non c'è direzione o progressione, ma un continuo tornare su se stesso. E, se osserviamo più da vicino le immagini della prima parte della poesia, ci rendiamo conto di quanto si ripeta questo ossessionante movimento circolare in uno spazio altrettanto chiuso e limitante. 'La carriera / del sole' (vv. 3-4) si riferisce al percorso apparente del sole che forma una curva parabolica e così la carriera dell'io-poetico ('[...] e la mia, breve', v. 4) la si può metaforizzare in una parabola, la parabola della vita, se si tengono in considerazione i passaggi *nascita-giovinezza-maturità-vecchiaia-morte* dove la *maturità* coincide con il vertice della parabola. Al verso 8 troviamo la parola 'ruota' e al verso 9 il passaggio del tempo si concretizza e visualizza in una metafora geometrica: una semiretta che genera un angolo o un cerchio: 'e t'attedia la ruota / che in ombra sul piano dispieghi' (vv. 8-9). E poi ancora al verso 10 la parola 'volta' (la volta celeste) e al verso 14 la parola 'cupola' caricate di valore negativo dal verbo 'gravare', dall'aggettivo 'infittita' e dall'avverbio di tempo 'mai' riferito a 'dissolta'. Queste immagini che si ripetono fino all'ossessione lungo tutta la prima parte della poesia (movimenti rotatori o parabolici e ripetitivi e zone spaziali chiuse) caratterizzano, in definitiva, la realtà spazio-temporale dell'esistenza umana: la vita è allora una 'volta' che 'grava' sull'io-poetico, una 'cupola mai dissolta' che chiude la sua breve vita sotto una campana. La parola 'ruota' al verso 8 crea l'immagine-cliché della *ruota del tempo* che in un certo senso si allarga anche al significato di *ruota della vita*. L'io-poetico è, in definitiva, prigioniero del tempo e esiste all'interno di un vero e proprio orologio: il tempo umano si svolge all'interno del meccanismo del tempo. Si tratta di un orologio con tanto di 'cupola' che chiude l'io in uno spazio limitato. E il fuscillo-meridiana più che essere complice del tempo e dello spazio sembra esserne vittima: è orologio, registra il passaggio del tempo, ma ne è pure prigioniero nel suo movimento rotatorio e ripetitivo, e nella sua collocazione sotto la cupola: prigioniero della dimensione spazio-temporale e, formalmente, di questa strofe-orologio. L'immagine creata è quella di una *mise-en-abîme*: un orologio dentro un altro orologio. Tutta la prima parte della poesia si svolge all'interno della dimensione tempo e il binomio finito-infinito diventerà, a sua volta, termine di paragone di un binomio più grande che si espleterà lungo tutta la poesia nella sua interezza: il binomio tempo-non-tempo. Per quanto riguarda la dimensione della spazialità, sembra che l'opposizione si allarghi in un trinomio di opposti: qui-*limen*-là.

Il tema del rapporto io-poetico – infinito sotteso dalla mancanza di un senso dello scorrere del tempo è recuperabile nella tradizione poetica italiana e, in questi primi versi della strofe iniziale del ‘Fuscello’, crediamo di scorgere la presenza di un intertesto leopardiano modificato da un lieve spostamento dell’‘accentuazione’.¹³ Ci riferiamo a ‘Canto notturno di un pastore errante dell’Asia’:

Dimmi, o luna: a che vale
 Al pastor la sua vita,
 La vostra vita a voi? dimmi: ove tende
 Questo vagar mio breve,
 Il tuo corso immortale? (vv. 16-20)

La voce narrante leopardiana non si rivolge ad un oggetto che misura il tempo, come fa l’io-poetico montaliano, ma il suo interlocutore è la luna direttamente, cioè quell’entità che rappresenta l’infinito, quale è il sole nel ‘Fuscello’. L’accentuazione dell’inter testo leopardiano è stata modificata anche nel tono poichè la serie di domande, a cui non corrispondono risposte, nel testo montaliano si trasforma in una descrizione: il quesito si è trasformato in sicurezza. Il rapporto io-leopardiano – infinito si trasforma e viene mediato da un terzo termine: il fuscello-meridiana che diviene l’interlocutore nel rapporto io-montaliano – fuscello-infinito (tempo):

Fuscello teso dal muro
 sì come l’indice d’una
 meridiana che scande la carriera
 del sole e la mia, breve (vv. 1-4)

Nella prima strofe del testo montaliano si può riconoscere la presenza di un intertesto leopardiano nella trama di un interdiscorso prettamente leopardiano.¹⁴ In questo modo Montale può esprimere il proprio pensiero poetico-filosofico facendo, allo stesso tempo, rientrare la sua poesia nella tradizione poetica italiana. La funzione dello studio dell’inter testo è precisamente quella di individuare le fonti di un dato poeta o scrittore per capire meglio la sua formazione culturale e il suo pensiero, ma anche e soprattutto, quella di poter collocare il testo preso in considerazione in una posizione precisa all’interno della tradizione letteraria.¹⁵ Il nostro interesse si concentra soprattutto nella seconda strofe di ‘Fuscello teso dal muro’ dove, sia dal punto di vista dell’uso del vocabolario, che da quello del

recupero dell'intertesto ci troviamo di fronte ad uno sdoppiamento. Vediamo di poter chiarire di cosa si tratti.

Se nella prima strofe abbiamo visto che l'uso del vocabolario e delle metafore creava un linguaggio ricco di immagini circolari e legate all'incessante e insensato passare del tempo, notiamo che, in tutta la sua lunghezza, nella seconda strofe di 'Fuscello' queste immagini ossessionanti sono state annullate, come lo è stato il concetto del tempo. L'uso del vocabolario in questa strofe si polarizza attorno a due campi magnetici di valori ben opposti: un campo assomma in sé tutto ciò che è luce e invisibile, l'altro una serie di immagini oscure e sinistre, quasi violente, che si visualizzano in metafore piratesche. 'Non adombri' e 'stamane' (v. 15), 'velo' (v. 6), 'invisibile' (v. 18), 'risplende' (v. 19), 'ai primi raggi' (v. 20). 'Scopre' (v. 21), 'mare' (v. 22), 'spiro' e 'scivola' (v. 24), 'brilla' (v. 26), 'acqua' e 'traccia' (v. 27) si richiamano fra di loro per magnetismo e si oppongono ad un'altra catena di vocaboli e immagini: 'notte' e 'strappato' (v. 17), 'orda' (v. 18), 'trealberi carico / di ciurma e di preda' (vv. 22-23), 'tolda' e 'timone' (v. 26) e 'scava' (v. 27). Per quanto riguarda la parola 'invisibile' (v. 18) questa può essere considerata di valore ambivalente, potrebbe infatti essere letta come aggettivo di 'orda' (avremmo allora un' 'orda invisibile') o di 'velo' (v. 16) ('invisibile' in questo caso, riprenderebbe la frase principale riunendo il soggetto 'velo' al verbo 'pende' dopo la subordinata relativa 'che nella notte hai strappato / a un'orda').

Abbiamo già detto, in precedenza, che questa seconda strofe rappresenta la zona *limine* e la zona oltre-varco dove il confine tra le due era stato posto nella parola 'Laggiù' (v. 20) di cui abbiamo già visto l'ambivalenza. Si direbbe che la seconda strofe, nella sua bidimensionalità di zona-*limine* – oltre-varco presenti un linguaggio di tipo ambivalente esso stesso che pure si lega e si sostiene per forze magnetiche di immagini e di metafore opposte. Ed è proprio nella struttura del linguaggio poetico che cerchiamo la comprova della trama ideologica della poesia montaliana. Troviamo, a conti fatti, uno sdoppiamento dell'uso del vocabolario in questa seconda strofe.

Vogliamo ora sondare il suo comportamento nei riguardi dell'intertestualità. Innanzitutto tematicamente si riprende il motivo del viaggio, chiaramente di sapore romantico. Si tratta di un viaggio non verso terre lontane ma oltre il nostro concetto di spazio e tempo, se è vero, come abbiamo visto in precedenza, che all'immagine del trealberi corrisponde l'al di là, la dimensione oltre-varco. Ma se lo spazio oltre-varco corrisponde con il 'nulla', l' 'informe', la 'morte' (con la pagina bianca nella dimensione

della scrittura) allora questo viaggio si identifica con il varcare la dimensione 'uomo' verso l'annientamento di tutto ciò che è l' 'uomo'. L'io montaliano non mira però a questo perchè non avrebbe senso; terminare la vita per sfuggirne è una prova di vigliaccheria e il poeta-sciamano ha un compito preciso: quello di permettere che il lettore-neofita giunga alla lettura veritiera e globale della realtà. Lo spazio della seconda strofe corrisponde, come abbiamo visto, al *limine* e all'oltre-varco ed è caratterizzato da vocaboli di valori opposti concatenati tra di loro. Il compito del poeta-sciamano e del lettore-neofita è di arrivare ad una visione unita di questi valori opposti, di compiere il viaggio verso questa totalità oltre la divisione bene-male della realtà spazio-temporale e storica. Questo viaggio deve, però, avvenire all'interno della zona *limine* dove si verifica il 'miracolo', o meglio nella fase di scrittura della poesia. Il viaggio collegato al 'trealberi carico / di ciurma e di preda' avviene 'laggiù', nella zona di confine tra *limine* e al di là dove leggi della fisica non contano più, dove tutto e niente è possibile. Crediamo che sia questo il motivo dell'intreccio di immagini luminose e dall'apparente sembianza positiva con vocaboli sinistri come 'ciurma' e 'preda': chi si spinge nella zona oltre-varco rischia di oltrepassare i limiti dove è possibile l'esistenza umana e di andare incontro all'incognito che possiede due volti diversi: uno positivo e salvifico, l'altro sinistro e spettrale. Dal punto di vista della ricerca dell'intertesto, questi due volti creano lo sdoppiamento a cui ci riferivamo più innanzi, cioè la presenza di due testi nel testo montaliano: uno dantesco e l'altro baudelairiano.¹⁶ Entrambi i testi presentano una dimensione di oltre-varco. Il testo dantesco, in particolare, della zona del Purgatorio dantesco dei primi due canti, simile alla zona marina del 'Fuscello' e dove, malgrado la presenza delle stesse leggi fisiche che agiscono nell'al di qua, avvengono dei fatti insoliti. Il momento è quello dell'alba.

L'alba vinceva l'ora mattutina
che fuggia innanzi, sì che di lontano
conobbi il tremolar de la marina. (*Purg.* I, 115-17)

Per quanto riguarda l'immagine dell'imbarcazione:

[...] e quei sen venne a riva
con un vasello snelletto e leggero,
tanto che l'acqua nulla ne 'nghiottiva. (*Purg.* II, 40-42)

In 'Fuscello' troviamo immagini straordinariamente simili a queste.

[...] Laggiù,
 dove la piana si scopre
 del mare, un trealberi carico
 di ciurma e di preda reclina
 il bordo a uno spiro, e via scivola.
 Chi è in alto e s'affaccia s'avvede
 che brilla la tolda e il timone
 nell'acqua non scava una traccia. (vv. 15-27)

Vediamo anche altre immagini purgatoriali che sembrano simili a quelle usate da Montale nel 'Fuscello':

Ed ecco, qual, sorpreso dal mattino,
 per li grossi vapor Marte rosseggia
 giù nel ponente sovra 'l suol marino,
 cotal m'apparve, s'io ancor lo veggia,
 un lume per lo mar venir sì ratto,
 che 'l muover suo nessun volar pareggia. (*Purg.* II, 13-18)

Da poppa stava il celestial nocchiero,
 tal che faria beato pur descripto;
 e più di cento spirti entro sediero. (*Purg.* II, 43-45)

Ebbene, siamo in entrambi i casi in presenza di paesaggi simili: un paesaggio marino, un vascello o un trealberi che brilla, o proietta un riflesso luminoso a chi lo guarda da lontano; per di più un vascello carico di 'ciurma e di preda' o di 'spirti', ma che pur essendo carico 'scivola via' ed è tuttavia 'snelletto e leggero' e il cui 'muover nessun volar pareggia'. Le immagini dantesche suggerirebbero una soluzione di salvezza, se il Purgatorio è la zona dove si compie la purificazione delle anime prima dell'ammissione alla plenitudine dell'amore divino. Ma l'intertesto purgatoriale viene inserito nella poesia montaliana con un lieve spostamento dell'accentuazione. È, infatti, la parola 'trealberi' e il vocabolario di tipo marinaresco e sinistro che ci spingono a cercare altre fonti. 'Trealberi' è usato esplicitamente da Charles Baudelaire in 'Le Voyage', la poesia che chiude la raccolta 'Les Fleurs du Mal':

Notre âme est un trois-mâts cherchant son Icarie;
 Une voix retentit sur le pont: 'Ouvre l'œil!'
 Une voix de la hune, ardente et folle, crie:
 'Amour... gloire... bonheur!' Enfer! c'est un écueil!

Chaque îlot signalé par l'homme de vigie
Est un Eldorado promis par le Destin

(*Les Fleurs du Mal*, II, 33-38)

La poesia 'Le Voyage' si incentra sulla narrazione di viaggiatori di terre lontane che tornando al loro paese vengono interrogati, da chi non ha potuto viaggiare, sulle meraviglie viste nei paesi d'oltre mare. Malgrado abbiano visto molto non sono comunque riusciti a eludere il sentimento di noia che opprime chi è rimasto:

III

Étonnants voyageurs! quelles nobles histoires
Nous lisons dans vos yeux profonds comme les mers!
Montrez-nous les écrins de vos riches mémoires,
Ces bijoux merveilleux, faites d'astres et d'éthers.

Nous voulons voyager sans vapeur et sans voile!
Faites, pour égayer l'ennui de nos prisons,
Passer sur nos esprits, tendus comme une toile,
Vos souvenirs avec leurs cadres d'horizons.

Dites, qu'avez-vous vu?

IV

'Nous avons vu des astres
Et des flots; nous avons vu des sables aussi;
Et, malgré bien des chocs et d'imprévus désastres,
Nous nous sommes souvent ennuyés, comme ici.'

(*Les Fleurs du Mal*, III-IV, 49-60)

La curiosità innata dello spirito baudelairiano, la sete del nuovo e dello sconosciuto sono solo saziabili nel viaggio oltre la morte ed è l'ultima parte di 'Le Voyage' che ci interessa, dove la venuta della Morte, il capitano del *tre alberi*, viene invocata:¹⁷

VIII

O Mort, vieux capitaine, il est temps! levons l'ancre!
Ce pays nous ennuie, ô Mort! Appareillons!

Si le ciel et la mer sont noires comme de l'encre,
Nos cœurs que tu connais sont remplis de rayons!

Verse-nous ton poison pour qu'il nous réconforte!
Nous voulons, tant ce feu nous brûle le cerveau,
Plonger au fond du gouffre, Enfer ou Ciel, qu'importe?
Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du *nouveau*!

(*Les Fleurs du Mal*, VIII, 137-44)

Il viaggio verso l'«inconnu» è metaforizzato da un *trealberi* come nel «Fuscello». Il sollievo dalla noia non si può trovare nel semplice viaggio in terre lontane e Baudelaire vede come unica speranza il salto nel vuoto, la morte dell'individuo e della civiltà occidentale deprecata perchè civiltà dell'inchiostro («si le ciel et la mer sont noirs comme de l'encre») per poter trovare il nuovo, l'«inconnu» preferibile, per quanto sinistro, a ciò che esiste. L'io montaliano si ferma all'esperienza in *limine* per poter trovare il «miracolo» e per recuperare la nostra dimensione reinterprestandola alla luce di questo «miracolo». Egli non può e non vuole compiere il salto, «plonger au fond du gouffre», poichè la sua funzione è quella di restare al di qua dello schermo e di indicare ad altri la strada al «miracolo», alla lettura integrale della realtà.

Alla luce della nostra analisi possiamo concludere che la seconda strofe di «Fuscello teso dal muro» presenta un tipo di intertesto bivalente ma che in definitiva viene a costituire un solo testo. In controluce si possono individuare due fonti di valore opposto: la prima che ha come esito la vita, se la zona purgatoriale è il passaggio verso la vita eterna e la verità; la seconda che indica la morte (morte della scrittura?) come via di uscita dalla noia dell'esistenza. Ma come era successo per l'uso del vocabolario che, pur facendo parte di due campi semantici opposti, si legava per formare un testo indissolubilmente unito da un tipo di forza quasi magnetica, così i due intertesti, malgrado la loro apparente incompatibilità, finiscono per creare un nuovo testo in cui gli opposti si fondono in una luminosità che finisce per diventarne il denominatore comune. Al gioco di luci e ombre della prima strofe, segno della divisione della realtà spazio-temporale-storica, si sostituisce una realtà unita seppur apparentemente divisa e, anzi, più potentemente unita per attrazione dalla sua bipolarità di fondo.

Abbiamo allora visto che nel linguaggio poetico l'io montaliano è in grado di infrangere lo schermo della lingua come riflesso della realtà spazio-temporale divisa e di riunire figure foniche e semantiche, unità metriche, e

intertestuali, che in apparenza si escludono, in una dimensione dove possono coesistere. La funzione del poeta è allora veramente molto simile a quella dello sciamano poichè, tramite il rito poetico, può dare un esempio e dimostrare al lettore (il neofita) come grazie alla poesia – ossia la fase di liminalità della scrittura – si possa pervenire ad una lettura unitaria e quindi veritiera della dimensione spazio-temporale e di ciò che sta al di là dello schermo.

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¹ M. Brose, 'The Spirit of the Sign: Oppositional Structures in Montale's "Ossi di Seppia"', *Stanford Italian Review*, 4 (1984), 147-75.

² R. Jakobson, 'Linguistics and Poetics', in *The Structuralists from Marx to Lévi-Strauss*, a cura di R. & F. De George (New York, Doubleday, 1972), p. 95. Questo saggio apparve per la prima volta in *Style in Language*, a cura di Th. A. Sebeok (Cambridge Mass., MIT Press, 1960), pp. 350-77.

³ G. M. Hopkins, *The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, a cura di H. House (London, Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 127.

⁴ Angelo Jacomuzzi si riferisce alla concezione dell'universo montaliano con il termine di 'universo fittizio': A. Jacomuzzi, *La poesia di Montale* (Torino, Einaudi, 1978), p. 19. Sulla visione del reale e della sua inconoscibilità si vedano anche P. V. Mengaldo, 'Montale "fuori di casa"', in *La tradizione del Novecento. Da D'Annunzio a Montale* (Milano, Feltrinelli, 1975), p. 325; A. Williamson, 'Montale and the Screen of Images', *Parnassus – Poetry in Review*, 13, ii (1986), 179-92.

⁵ Per la critica sul tema della 'memoria' e del 'passaggio del tempo' si vedano: E. Bonora, *La poesia di Montale. Ossi di Seppia* (Padova, Liviana Editrice, 1982); E. Bonora, *Interpretazioni di Montale. Le Occasioni* (Torino, Editrice Tirrenia, 1978); E. Bonora, *Le metafore del vero. Saggi sulle "Occasioni" di Eugenio Montale* (Roma, Bonacci, 1981); E. Graziosi, *Il tempo in Montale. Storia di un tema* (Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1978); R. Luperini, *Storia di Montale* (Bari, Editori Laterza, 1992); G. Quinsat, 'A Failing Memory', *Nouvelle Revue Française*, 380 (1984), 67-73.

⁶ 'Male', 'miracolo', e 'non-necessario', oltre a essere termini propriamente montaliani, sono stati usati nella critica montaliana da Gianfranco Contini. Si vedano G. Contini, *Una lunga fedeltà. Scritti su Eugenio Montale* (Torino, Einaudi, 1974); A. Marchese, *Visiting Angel. Interpretazione semiologica della poesia di Montale* (Torino, Società editrice internazionale, 1977).

⁷ In questo caso non mi riferisco ad assonanza in termini rigorosi, ma chiamo 'assonanza imperfetta' quel legame fonico che lega 'dispiuma' a 'primavera' fatto sentire soprattutto dalla ripetizione della sillaba '-ma-' atona e dalla presenza di questa sillaba in due parole con accenti secondari sulla prima sillaba: 'dispiúma' e 'primavéra'. Per l'uso degli accenti mi riferisco alle convenzioni in G. Lepschy, 'Proposte per l'accento secondario', *The Italianist*, 12 (1992), 117-28.

⁸ E. Montale, 'Introduzione a G. Gozzano', in *Le poesie di Gozzano* (Milano, Garzanti, 1960), pp. 7-15 (p. 9). Si vedano anche G. Manacorda, *Montale* (Firenze, Il Castoro, 1969), p. 15; E. Sanguineti, 'Da Gozzano a Montale', *Lettere italiane*, 5 (1955), 188-207.

⁹ Il rapporto Montale-D'Annunzio è stato studiato dettagliatamente da P. V. Mengaldo, 'Da D'Annunzio a Montale: ricerche sulla formazione e la storia del linguaggio poetico montaliano', in *Ricerche sulla lingua poetica contemporanea. Quaderni del circolo filologico-linguistico padovano*, a cura di G. Folena (Padova, Liviana, 1966), pp. 163-262. Questo articolo è stato successivamente ampliato in Mengaldo, *La tradizione*. Si veda anche O. Giannangeli, *Metrica e significato in D'Annunzio e Montale* (Chieti, Solfanelli, 1988). Per quanto riguarda gli studi Montale-Gozzano e Montale-D'Annunzio si vedano anche i seguenti: P. Bonfiglioli, 'Pascoli, Gozzano, Montale e la poesia dell'oggetto', *Il Verri*, 2, iv (1958), 34-54; G. Sgattori, 'Pascoli e D'Annunzio maestri di Montale', *Dimensioni*, 2, i (1958), 19-26; Sanguineti.

¹⁰ G. Devoto & G. Oli, *Il dizionario della lingua italiana* (Firenze, Le Monnier, 1990).

¹¹ Per ulteriori approfondimenti su studi semiologici del testo montaliano dal punto di vista delle immagini di movimento si vedano M. Rombi, *Montale: parole, sensi e immagini* (Roma, Bulzoni, 1978); D'A. S. Avale, '“Gli orecchini” di Montale', in *Tre saggi su Montale* (Torino, Einaudi, 1970), p. 21-90.

¹² Per questo tipo di analisi di decostruzione e ricostruzione dei versi poetici mi rifaccio ad un'analisi analoga a quella di D'A. S. Avale, 'A Liuba che parte', in *Tre saggi*, pp. 93-99.

¹³ 'Accentuazione': termine usato da M. Bakhtin in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, a cura di C. Emerson & M. Holquist, traduzione di V. W. McGee (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 89.

¹⁴ Per quanto riguarda gli studi relativi al rapporto Montale-Leopardi si vedano S. Battaglia, *Leopardi e Montale* (Napoli, Liguori, 1964); D. C. L. Huffman, 'Eugenio Montale and Giacomo Leopardi', *Italian Quarterly*, 28 (1987), 25-33; R. Lansing, 'From Hedge

to Wall: Montale via Leopardi', in *Studi di filologia e letteratura italiana: In onore di Maria Picchio Simonelli*, a cura di P. Frassica (Alessandria, Orso, 1992), pp. 177-84.

¹⁵ Per questo si veda M. Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1978).

¹⁶ Uno dei campi più ampiamente studiati nella critica montaliana è stato quello del rapporto con la poetica dantesca. Per il dantismo di Montale si vedano i seguenti: P. Bonfiglioli, 'Dante, Pascoli, Montale', in AA.VV., *Nuovi studi pascoliani* (Centro di Cultura dell'Alto Adige, Società degli Studi Romagnoli, Bolzano-Cesena, 1963); A. Pipa, *Montale and Dante* (St Paul MN, Central Publishing Company, 1968); Mengaldo, *La tradizione*; L. Blasucci, 'Presenze dantesche nella poesia del Novecento: da D'Annunzio a Montale', *Bollettino della Società Letteraria di Verona*, 4 (1983), 5-6; Z. G. Barański, 'Dante and Montale: The Threads of Influence' in *Dante Comparisons. Comparative Studies of Dante and: Montale, Foscolo, Tasso, Chaucer, Petrarch, Propertius and Catullus*, edited by E. Haywood & B. Jones (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 1985), pp. 11-48; G. Ioli, 'Dante e Montale', *Lecture Classensi XIV* (Ravenna, Longo, 1985), pp. 99-120; R. Valucci, 'Dante as Seen in Montale's "Ossi di Seppia"', *Beiträge zur Romanischen Philologie*, 27 (1988), 111-22. Il rapporto tra Montale e la poesia francese simbolista è stata studiata nel seguente lavoro: T. Barbieri, 'Montale e il mito simbolista', *Lingua e Stile*, 23, i, (1988), 95-112. Si vedano le affermazioni dello stesso Montale in un suo scritto, *Intenzioni (Intervista immaginaria)* del 1946, ora raccolto in E. Montale, *Sulla poesia*, a cura di G. Zampa (Milano, Mondadori, 1976).

¹⁷ Per la curiosità dello spirito baudelairiano, basti citare la poesia del poeta 'Le Rêve d'un curieux' in *Les Fleurs du Mal*.

APPENDIX III

Published article: 'Deixis and the Dynamics of the Relationship between Text and Reader in the poetry of Eugenio Montale', *EWPAL*, 7 (1996), 100-9.

DEIXIS AND THE DYNAMICS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEXT AND READER IN THE POETRY OF EUGENIO MONTALE.

Rossella Riccobono (DAL)

Abstract

This article analyses the function of deixis in the poetry of Eugenio Montale, in particular 'In limine'. The main objective is to show how deixis is involved in the dynamic relationship between text and reader. A cline of contexts of situation is created by poetic discourse, from that where the reader is 'invisible eavesdropper, overhearing a conversation between others' to that in which 'the reader can [...] place himself or herself within the deictic centre' (Semino 1992: 137ff) by adopting an appropriate distance towards the events that are being recounted. In Montale's 'In limine' the reader is not only an 'eavesdropper' or able to place him/herself in the deictic centre, but symbolically takes an active part in the context of communication, and becomes a necessary element for the functioning of the text.

1. Introduction

Eugenio Montale (1896-1981) is one of the major Italian poets of the 20th century. During his lifetime he worked as translator, journalist, opera and literary critic. His poetic work was written over sixty-five years and includes: *Ossi di seppia* (1925; 1928), *Occasioni* (1939), *La Bufera e altro* (1956), *Satura* (1971), *Diario del '71 e del '72* (1973), *Quaderno di quattro anni* (1977).

The constant problem presented by the Montalian texts is that of a disharmony felt by the poetic voice with the spatio-temporal dimensions in which he/she is placed (both existentially and historically) and which are felt as obstacles preventing the passage into new dimensions where the traditional concepts of space and time lose their claustrophobic significance. The Montalian voices are described by various metaphors as prisoners of spatio-temporal dimensions. In 'In limine', the poetic voice is described as like a fish in a net:¹

*Cerca una maglia rotta nella rete
che ci stringe, tu balza fuori, fuggi!*

(Look for a broken mesh in the net
that grips us, leap out, and escape!)

('In limine', *Ossi di seppia*, ll. 15-16)

In 'Meriggiare pallido e assorto' the poetic voice is imprisoned by a high wall in an uncomfortably hot and hostile garden:

*Meriggiare pallido e assorto
presso un rovente muro d'orto,
ascoltare tra i pruni e gli sterpi
schiocchi di merli, frusci di serpi.
[...]*

(To laze the noon pale and thoughtful
near to some blazing garden-wall,
to listen in the thorn-hedge and the brake
to clattering of blackbird, rustle of snake.
[...])

*E andando nel sole che abbaglia
sentire con triste meraviglia
com'è tutta la vita e il suo travaglio
in questo seguitare una muraglia
che ha in cima cocci aguzzi di bottiglia.*

And as you go in the dazzling sun
to feel with sad bewilderment
how all of life and its suffering
is in this steady following
a wall with jagged bottle for its rim.)

('Meriggiare pallido e assorto', *Ossi di seppia*)

The pivot of Montale's poems becomes the search for salvation which is, in most of his lyrics, associated with the successful relationship between the speaking voice and the hearer-addressee who can, to a certain extent, be recognisable in a feminine figure, in a past or possible lover with whom the speaking voice can complete the philosophical journey which will free both of them. In 'Dora Markus' the hearer-addressee indicates that the land to which she belongs is beyond the sea. Just as in 'In limine' a wall encloses the

speaking voice within a claustrophobic garden, the sea in 'Dora Markus' can be seen as another metaphor for the insurmountable obstacle which divides Dora from her own country, a land which is placed beyond the spatial co-ordinates where the speaking voice and the hearer-addressee are placed. This can be recognised as a feeling of disharmony with the surrounding spatio-temporal environment which unites the hearer-addressee and the Montalian poetic voice as twin-souls:

*Fu dove il ponte di legno
mette a Porto Corsini sul mare alto
e rari uomini, quasi immoti, affondano
o salpano le reti. Con un segno
della mano additavi all'altra sponda
invisibile la tua patria vera.
Poi seguimmo il canale fino alla darsena...*

(It was where the wooden pier juts out
above the sea at Porto Corsini
and a few men, almost immobile, drop
and pull up nets. With a wave
of your hand you pointed at the unseen
land across the sea - your own.
Then we followed the canal...)

(*'Dora Markus'*, *Le occasioni*, ll. 1-7)

However, this relationship turns out to be impossible as the hearer-addressee is either absent or has lost his/her memory:

*La speranza di pure rivederti
m'abbandonava;*

(The hope that somehow I might see you again
Was slipping from me;

*e mi chiesi se questo che mi chiude
ogni senso di te, schermo d'immagini,
ha i segni della morte o dal passato
è in esso, ma distorto e fatto labile,
un tuo barbaglio...*

And I asked myself if what shut me out
From any sense of you - that screen of images -
Bore death's stigmata; or if something of the past
Still lingered in it, but distorted and grown tenuous,
Some dazzle of you...)

(Mottetto 6, *Le occasioni*, ll. 1-7)

*Tu non ricordi la casa dei doganieri
sul rialzo a strapiombo sulla scogliera:
desolata t'attende dalla sera
in cui v'entrò lo sciame dei tuoi pensieri
e vi sostò irrequieto.*

(You don't remember the shorewatchers' house
above the rock-reef, sheer, upon the height:
it waits for you bereavedly since the night
the swarm of your thoughts came there to house
unquietly to stay.)

(*'La casa dei doganieri'*, *Le occasioni*, ll. 1-5)

Throughout his work Montale puts emphasis on the same problem in different ways by changing tone and expressions, but fundamentally pivoting around the same question: how to defeat the spatio-temporal-historical limitations of reality. Montale adopts poetry as a means of expression in order to carry out his research into his philosophical view of life and reality: the result of this is that his poetic system can be viewed as a philosophy where *poesis* equals *gnosis* (Brose 1984; Riccobono 1994).²

On reading Montale's poems, one is struck by the richness of structures adopted within the text, and by the highly metaphorical expressions which indicate spatio-temporal dimensions and interpersonal relationships between poetic voices and addressees present within the same fictitious context.

Many studies have been carried out on the various identities of the persons into which the poetic addressees, present within the context of the Montalian poems, could be conflated. Montale himself often played around with the identity of the addressees in his poems and their appearance in the different texts: this contributed to the allegorical nature of his poems. Martelli (1977) has come to the conclusion that the women addressees in Montale's poems can be synthesised into one and the same throughout his work.³

The poem 'Il tu', (from *Satura*), explains the presence of multiple 'tu' (addressees) as the projection of one 'tu' which Montale himself, by commenting on his critics' definitions, refers to as an 'istituto' (a concept). I shall use this as a starting point for my arguments in this article. If the 'tu' is a conceptual-poetic construct, it

is easy to view it as a linguistic construct and follow its developments from a linguistic-deictic point of view. Moreover, this seems to be indirectly authorised by Montale himself:

*I critici ripetono,
da me depistati,
che il mio tu è un istituto.
Senza questa colpa avrebbero saputo
che in me i tanti sono uno anche se appaiono
moltiplicati dagli specchi. Il male
è che l'uccello preso nel paretaio
non sa se lui sia lui o uno dei troppi
suoi duplicati.*

(The critics repeat,
derailed by me,
that my 'tu' is a construct.
Without this fault they would have known
that in me the many are one even though they
appear
multiplied by the mirrors. The bad thing
is that the bird caught in the net
does not know whether it is itself or one of his
many
duplicates)

(*'Il tu', Satura*)

Exegeses of the poem 'In limine' (see also section 5) include Ramat 1972, Brose 1984, Fabris 1984, Giachery 1985. Ramat pondered on the possible identification of the garden with the text itself. In this article I would like to expand this point to propose a new reading of 'In limine', through the study of the deictic system. I believe that the study of deixis is of fundamental help for the critic to analyse the Montalian poetic text as a dynamic one where the reader and the addressee can, in some instances, be identical and where their roles must be of an active nature in order for the poems to achieve their philosophical purpose: i.e. function as gnostic instruments of salvation.

2. What is deixis?⁴

Each natural language functions as a system of infinite potential texts which are referentially connected to the surrounding social and physical context of its speakers. Language in use is, therefore, closely connected to the world in which the speakers live, and necessarily refers to that world. Reference is a fundamental component in languages as a speaker can only speak about, make comments, describe facts which are related to existence: in other words, languages must not 'violate an existential presupposition' (Lyons 1981: 225). In literary language, where contexts are fictionally created, the same principle applies (Lyons 1981; Riffaterre 1979). More will be said about deixis in literary texts, especially lyric poems, in the next section of this paper.

The term 'deixis' refers to the function that demonstratives, personal pronouns, tense and other grammatical and lexical linguistic elements have in an utterance in its relation to the spatio-temporal co-ordinates of the surrounding environment.

Deixis has been recognised by Lyons (1975) as the source of reference. It encodes grammatically and/or lexically the relationship between the speaker (of the utterance), or **zero-point** (Lyons 1977: 638; Green 1992: 122), or *origo* (Bühler 1934), and the spatio-temporal context where the utterance is encoded. It also clarifies the interpersonal relationship between the speaker and the hearer(s).

Deixis involves a centre of orientation which is egocentric because the encoder of the utterance functions as the origin of a relationship between him/herself and the surrounding cognitive environment. As a matter of fact the deictic system sets the co-ordinates of communication from the speaker's point of view and it encodes the speaker's subjectivity (Lyons 1982).⁵ Deixis can be more clearly understood if it is related to its origins in the canonical situation of utterance, i.e. the face-to-face linguistic interaction.

I begin by defining some of the deictic categories which I shall be referring to in the examination of Montale's poems.⁶

The spatial category of deixis includes spatial adverbs such as 'here' and 'there'; direction expressions 'left', 'right', 'up', 'down', 'north', 'south', 'east' and 'west'; also demonstrative adjectives and pronouns 'this' and 'that'.

Temporal deixis includes temporal adverbs 'now', 'then', 'today', 'yesterday', 'tomorrow'. Tense is another linguistic element which is accounted for by the category of temporal deixis. Tense in tensed languages allows the speaker and, together with him/her, the hearer, to project themselves into the past or future, backwards and forward in time, as if texts were real worlds with precise spatio-temporal dimensions. The so-called **deictic projection** (Lyons 1977) allows the speaker and the hearer of a text to picture themselves at a time t_1 , different from the coding time t_0 , and (re-)experience the event while it is recounted.

The central tense that expresses the temporal dimension of the act of utterance is the present tense. The temporal co-ordinate of the act of utterance, or **coding time**, is to be seen as separable from the time referred to in the utterance itself, or **content time** (Sell 1987). In the canonical situation of utterance **coding time** coincides with **receiving time**, or what I would rather define as **decoding time**, as this involves a relationship with a hearer and his/her decoding of the message. We have already seen how fundamental the function of the addressee is for the functioning of deixis. However, outwith the face-to-face situation of utterance, coding and receiving times occur separately.

The category of deictic reference comprehends: definite referring expressions, demonstratives (adjectives and pronouns); definite articles; pronominal expressions.

Origo includes first and second personal pronouns; vocatives; honorific titles. I agree with Green (1992) in including second person personal pronouns under the category of the *origo*, as second persons refer to the hearer/addressee who plays an active role in the context of utterance and therefore can be seen as closely related to the *origo*.

Empathetic deixis may be considered as a sub-category of the *origo*. In fact it refers to those parts of the speech which encode mental proximity or distance to the *origo*. When such expressions are present within the context of utterance, the text may involve an emotional participation of the speaking voice and of the reader in the fictitious context. This can be achieved by the use of proximal demonstratives when referring to objects or persons which are not present within the same spatio-temporal co-ordinates where the poetic *persona* and the reader are placed: by using proximal demonstratives the speaking voice establishes a closer emotional relationship with what is being described: this relationship can be defined as empathy.

3. **Deixis in the poetic text**

Bakhtin (1981) claimed that whilst the novel originated and developed as a heteroglossic and dialogic literary genre, poetry is a monologic and monoglossic linguistic phenomenon and is, therefore, inferior. Some studies have been made recently on the nature of the language in the lyric poem and on the deictic systems which mobilise speaking voices and contexts of utterance within the lyric poem (Wales 1988, 1993; Geyer-Ryan 1988; Herman 1989; Green 1992; Semino 1992, 1995; Widdowson 1993).

This study proposes to emphasise the dynamic nature of the lyric poem by showing that the role of the reader is also dynamic and that, in certain cases, the reader takes part in the fictitious contexts he/she creates while reading/interpreting the poetic text. This will be the starting point for the discussion of the dynamic relationship between reader and text. The aim of this paper is to show that the role of the reader is built into the economy of Montale's poetic texts.

The origin of deixis lies in the face-to-face situation of utterance, i.e. the situation which implies that the speaker, the hearer and the referent are present within the same spatio-temporal context. If the referent is not present within the same context, then the speaker can indicate the referent by having recourse, for example, to demonstratives or definite articles. It is possible, however, for humans to create discourse and operate it outside the boundaries of the canonical situation. This is the case of written discourse where a fictitious context has to be created pivoting around a speaking voice and, when the text is read, recreated by the addressee. In order to do this it is necessary to recreate spatio-temporal and interpersonal dimensions similar to those which regulate the human physical environment.

The behaviour and implications of deictic systems and the nature of the speaking voices who grammatically behave as subjects of the fictional 'enunciations' (Todorov 1981: 324) have been a topic of much attention

for stylisticians in the past few years. Traditionally the speaking voices or *personae* of texts, around which deictic systems revolve, cannot be identified with real-life authors, but are linguistic constructs (Herman 1989) deriving from the relationship that a reader establishes with a text when interpreting it. The same can be said when referring to poetic voices within the lyric poem genre.

Green (1992: 125) defines lyric poetry as a genre that mobilises a 'monologic "I" figure'. In this he seems to agree with the Bakhtinian concept of poetic voice. It is true that in many cases the poetic *persona* of a poem can be monological, but there are enough cases, especially in 20th century poetry, where there are linguistic proofs that the nature of the poetic voice is dialogic. There are cases, however, of poetic texts where neither a deictic centre, or zero-point (Green 1992: 122), nor the objects referred to deictically, are present within the context of situation of a poem. In this case we refer to the category of deixis as *phantasma* (Bühler 1982).

Semino (1992) has claimed that the relationship between the speaking voice in the lyrical poem and the reader can vary from the case where the reader is a complete spectator to the fictitious context of utterance, as if an 'eavesdropper' listening to other people's private conversations, to the case where the reader is drawn into the context to participate emotionally in the implications of the poetic text. The emotional participation of the reader in the fictitious context can be achieved by the use of **empathetic deixis**.

Green claims that in a lyric poem the situation is often dramatised and that an **experiencing mode** and an **observing mode** of description are expressed simultaneously. The experiencing mode of description in language is considered deictic by Lyons (1977; 1982), as the speaking voice can project itself back into a precise past temporal co-ordinate and narrate the event(s) as if it was being experienced again during the act of utterance. On the other hand, the observing mode of description is non-deictic as it presupposes a detached way of narrating events.

The term [...] 'historical', is intended to suggest the narration of events, ordered in terms of successivity and presented dispassionately with the minimum of subjective involvement; and this mode of description clearly related to the static, non-deictic, objective conception of time. The term 'experiential', on the other hand, is suggestive of the kind of description that might be given by someone who is personally involved in what he is describing; and this mode is no less clearly related to the dynamic, deictic, subjective conception of time. (Lyons 1977: 688)

If the experiencing mode and the observing modes of description are present in the lyric poem at the same time, that means that the concept of time in poetry is partly deictic and partly non-deictic.

Green (1992) considers deixis a central element in the understanding of the lyric poem, because it enables the reader to construct a context so as to interpret the symbolic meaning of the text. Semino agrees and underlines the fact that the contexts readers build may vary 'depending on the interplay between the deictic expressions in the text, the subject-matter and linguistic properties of the text as a whole, the readers' attitudes and background knowledge' (1992: 135). She has also shown how the deictic centre can shift within the same text and, thus, how the point of view of the fictional enunciations can vary (Semino 1995). This has drawn attention to deictic shifts which imply the presence of multiple voices within the same text. She has, thus, proved the dynamic nature of poetic voices in the lyric poem.

Deixis is egocentric in nature as the context created by the speaking voice requires that the decoder assumes the speaking *persona*'s point of view in order for the text to be understood. The poetic voice or voices within the same poetic text are represented by the number of different 'I's or zero-points present. Each zero-point within the poetic structure is egocentric in nature and identifies a slight change of perspective within the narration. In this sense, more than one subjectivity can be found in a text, representing as many *alter egos* of what Short and Leech refer to as the 'implied author' (1981: 259), as there are deictic centres. If poetry is partly deictic and partly non-deictic, then to each narratorial level, identified by one deictic centre, there should correspond two different perspectives of narration, i.e. one in the experiential mode and one in the observing mode. It can be claimed, at this point, that poetry uses, as prose does, a Chinese-box narratorial structure, where the observing mode of narration can be considered more authoritative, or closer to the level

of the implied author, than the experiential one. This consideration shows the complexity of the structure of a poetic text, contrary to the simplistic idea of poetry which would derive from the Bakhtinian theories.

4. Text to reader: three examples in the Montalian poetic system.

The analysis of the following three poems by Montale is meant to show a cline of relationships between reader and poetic text within the Montalian system. These relationships are created by the different use of deixis, by the presence or absence of an explicit addressee within the fictitious context and by the possible overlapping of addressee and reader or speaking voice and reader.

In 'Forse un mattino' ('Perhaps one morning') it can be seen that the deictic system is organised as revolving completely around the first person speaker 'I'.

<i>Forse un mattino andando in un'aria di vetro, arida, rivolgendomi, vedrò compirsi il miracolo: il nulla alle mie spalle, il vuoto dietro di me, con un terrore di ubriaco</i>	(Perhaps one morning going along in a barren air like glass I shall turn around to see the miracle take place: nothingness at my back, a void stretching behind me, with a drunk man's terror.
--	---

<i>Poi come s'uno schermo, s'accamperanno di gitto alberi case e colli per l'inganno consueto. Ma sarà troppo tardi; ed io me n'andrò zitto tra gli uomini che non si voltano, col mio segreto.</i>	Then as on a screen, assembling themselves in one rush will come trees, houses, hills, by the accustomed trick. But it will be too late: and I shall go along quiet among the men who do not turn, with my secret.)
---	--

The spatial co-ordinates are set by negation, 'nothingness at my back', by use of the possessive adjective 'my' which refers to the poetic voice of the fictitious context. There truly seems to be nothing or nobody else present in the poetic context but the poetic persona. It is clear that the deictic structure of the poem is organised in such a way that no hearer is implied within the poetic context. The enunciation is either thought or spoken by a person to himself in an environment defined solely by a first-person personal pronoun and first-person possessive adjectives which function as *origo* deictics. This structure seems to prove that the poetic voice in this context is monological.

In the poem n.7 of Xenia II, from *Satura* (1971), the use of direct speech and the interplay of the roles of first and second person within the utterances makes it clear that the reader is witnessing a conversation between two persons.⁷

<i>'Non sono mai stato certo di essere al mondo'. 'Bella scoperta, m'hai risposto, e io?'. 'Oh il mondo tu l'hai mordicchiato, se anche in dosi omeopatiche. Ma io...'</i>	('I have never been sure of being in this world'. 'What a discovery, you've replied, and how about me?'. 'At least you've taken morsels of the world, though in homeopathic doses. But I...')
--	---

The second-person pronoun 'tu' implies the presence of the explicit addressee, to whom the poetic voice is speaking, within the fictitious context of utterance. The fact that the addressee replies to the poetic voice's statement, turns the addressee into a second poetic voice and the first poetic voice into a second addressee. The reader is therefore placed in the position of somebody who is overhearing a conversation between other people: an 'invisible eavesdropper' (Semino 1992). The context of the poetic text can be considered as a fictitious face-to-face situation of utterance. At the same time it is possible to say that the deictic system of this poem is organised revolving around two poetic voices, therefore its context presents multiple voices.

Finally, 'Meriggiare pallido e assorto' ('To laze the noon'), from *Ossi di seppia*, presents a deictic organisation at *phantasma*.

<i>Meriggiare pallido e assorto presso un rovente muro d'orto, ascoltare tra i pruni e gli sterpi schiocchi di merli, frusci di serpi.</i>	(To laze the noon pale and thoughtful near to some blazing garden-wall, to listen in the thorn-hedge and the brake to clattering of blackbird, rustle of snake.
--	--

*Nelle crepe del suolo o su la vecchia
spiar le file di rosse formiche
ch'ora si rompono e ora s'intrecciano
a sommo di minuscole biche.*

*Osservare tra i frondi il palpitare
lontano di scaglie di mare
mentre si levano tremuli scricchi
di cicale dai calvi picchi.*

*E andando nel sole che abbaglia
sentire con triste meraviglia
com'è tutta la vita e il suo travaglio
in questo seguitare una muraglia
che ha in cima cocci aguzzi di bottiglia.*

In cracks of the soil, where the vetch is
to catch the red ants in their single tracks
now braking formation, now intersecting
upon the top of their minute stacks.

To watch through green branches the throbbing
of sea-scales far in the offing
while the wavering creak goes up
of cicadas from the bold mountain tops.

And as you go in the dazzling sun
to feel with sad bewilderment
how all of life and its suffering
is in this steady following
a wall with jagged bottle for its rim.)⁸

No first-person speaker is present within the fictitious context: the deictic structure pivots around a number of infinitives ('Merigiare', 'ascoltare', 'spiar', 'osservare', 'sentire') and a gerund ('andando') which do not mobilise a spatio-temporal zero-point. The co-ordinate of time in this poem is null. The first word of the poem is 'merigiare' which means to spend the hot hours of noon resting in the shade.⁹ 'Meriggio' is noon, is the moment when the sun is at its highest. The transformation of a moment 'meriggio' into a verb of durative action 'merigiare' creates a sudden breach within the concept of time. One moment has been transformed into a undefined period of time: in other words, the conventional concept of time has been nullified and the whole of the text floats in a world where only space exists. This sense of lack of time is perfectly rendered in Italian by the indefinite use of the infinitive of verbs and by the gerund in line 13.

The demonstrative 'questo' (l. 16) sets the spatial co-ordinate and leads the reader to two interpretations: the former refers to the fictional context created by the poetic text; the latter can be extended by the reader to the human condition in general, of life as suffering. In the first interpretation of the text the reader can assume a psychological distance from the context of utterance as an imagined situation; the second reading of the text implies a possible recognition by the reader of the context of fictional utterance with life in general. This creates a blur in the distinction between the real and the fictitious contexts, where any reader may become involved within the spatial deixis. The spatial deixis being defined by the demonstrative 'questo' ('this') can also be interpreted as **empathetic** deixis.

In these analyses, we have seen that the relationship between text and reader is variable according to the overall meaning of the text, to the deictic system employed by the poetic language and to the knowledge, background and psychological distance adopted by the reader. There are cases, though, where the role and presence of the reader is essential to the functioning of the poetic text. In these cases it is not only possible for the reader to place himself within the fictive context of enunciation, but it is necessary that he does so. I would refer to this as 'role of the reader built into the text'. To illustrate this point the next section will focus on the analysis of Eugenio Montale's poem 'In limine'.

5. Space dimensions and the relationship between text and reader in 'In limine' by Eugenio Montale.¹⁰

In this section the poem 'In limine' ('On the threshold'), which Montale chose to place at the opening of his first book, *Ossi di seppia* (1925, 1928), will be analysed. This poem is paradigmatic for the use of deixis and the aim of this section is to show that the analysis of the deixis system within this text is fundamental for the comprehension of the dynamic nature of Montale's poetic language. In particular, focus will be on the dynamics of the relationship between speaking voice, text and reader.

*Godi se il vento ch'entra nel pomario
vi rimena l'ondata della vita:
qui dove affonda un morto
viluppo di memorie,
orto non era, ma reliquiario.*

(Be glad if the wind in the green nursery
brings you back the surging of life:
here where a dead coil
of memories sinks,
was no garden, but reliquary.

*Il frullo che tu senti non è un volo,
ma il commuoversi dell'eterno grembo;
vedi che si trasforma questo lembo
di terra solitario in un crogiuolo.*

*Un rovello è di qua dall'erto muro.
Se procedi t'imbatti
tu forse nel fantasma che ti salva:
si compongono qui le storie, gli atti
scancellati pel giuoco del futuro.*

*Cerca una maglia rotta nella rete
che ci stringe, tu balza fuori, fuggi!
Va, per te l'ho pregato, - ora la sete
mi sarà lieve, meno acre la ruggine...*

*The throbbing that you hear is not of flight,
but tremor in the eternal womb;
see how this solitary edge of land
turns into a crucible.*

*Rage is on the sheer wall's nearer side.
If you go on, you will come
- you perhaps - across the phantom that saves:
here the stories are composed, the acts
that the game of the future makes void.*

*Look for a broken mesh in the net
that grips us, leap out, and escape!
Go, for you I've asked this - now my thirst
will be mild, less biting the rust...*¹¹

It should be observed that the coding time (the time of the enunciation or fictional speech event) and the content time (the time of the enounced or narrated event) of this poem are identical: this is clear because of the use of the imperatives 'Godi', 'vedi', 'cerca', 'fuggi', 'balza' and 'va'. The use of imperatives mobilises a deictic centre, the speaking voice, and a silent addressee who is either already within the context of utterance or is being invited to participate in it. The imperatives are therefore acting as *origo* deictics (Green 1992: 126).

The next lexical item which must be considered is the definite article 'il', defining 'pomario' ('nel pomario' - in the apple tree orchard) which acts as a deictic reference. This not only gives the idea that the speaking voice and the addressee know to which orchard the poet is referring to, but knots a tighter bond between them, implying the existence of a well known and familiar place where they have possibly met or, at least, spent some time together. The orchard is a place which recurs frequently in Montale's poetry, especially in his first book.

In the third line we meet the first spatial deictic 'qui' (here) which completes the scene: the context of utterance is defined by the following co-ordinates: *now* and *here*. Moreover, 'here' has some further implications as both the addressee and the speaking voice are placed in the same fictitious context, that is in the apple tree orchard, at the same time (i.e. coding time). *Here* and *now* may also be interpreted as referring to the receiving time (the time of contact between the text and the addressee or decoder). Thus content, coding and receiving times can be interpreted as identical and, from this, it results that 'In limine' is a poetic text *in fieri*: it takes sense from the direct interpretation of the addressee who is now also identical to the reader. This consideration leads us to add some more spatial implications: 'qui', in the third line, not only refers to the 'pomario' but also to the poetic text. At the same time, due to the rhyme that links the first and the fifth lines, it also refers to the 'reliquiario' (reliquary). A reliquary is a place where relics are kept and therefore it connotes a sacred place, but dead; a place where the past lives and where our memories linger, but which is now brought back to life by the wind ('il vento', l. 1). 'Era' (it was, l. 5) suddenly creates a further dimension in the temporal setting: a past situation which is of lesser importance than the present time because it refers to the status of the 'pomario' (now a fertile and productive plot of land) before the wind came to bring back life to it, i.e. when it was only a reliquary.

The presence of two sets of temporal deictic shifters are then of prime importance in order for us to be able to understand the spatial dimensions of the place where the speaking voice has brought us. The space of the context of utterance can have two different natures: a reliquary or an orchard. It is the presence of the wind that can change it from one to the other. We may interpret the wind as the relationship established by the reader-addressee with the speaking voice as a consequence of his/her reading of the poem. In other words the poetic text comes to life and becomes fruitful only because it is read by somebody; were it to remain unread it would be a reliquary, i.e. dead language. Deixis has so far been used by the poet to draw the addressee-reader into the space of a reliquary-poem-orchard situation, thus bringing the wind of life to dead memories in order for them to turn into alive and fruitful language. The need for an addressee-reader is therefore built into the poetic text.

In the second stanza, from the connotation of a feeling of pleasure ('Godi') where the sense of touch is involved, we are now attracted by a sound: 'il frullo' ('the throbbing'). The poet uses a definite article with the word 'frullo' ('il') as a deictic reference in order for us to hear the sounds he is referring to. This sound is being heard by both the addressee-reader (il frullo che *tu* senti) and the speaking voice. At the beginning of the poem the speaking voice was progressively making use of different categories of deixis in order to invite the reader to become part of the text and to bring back to it the breath of life. Now that the reader-addressee has become part of the poetic text and has transformed the reliquary back into a fruitful orchard, the poet directs the reader's attention to what is happening within the orchard, connoted as a symbolical space. We find another imperative in line 8, 'vedi' (literally 'see', but there seems to be a more active meaning in the verb, i.e. 'look'), which functions as an *origo* deictic and connotes a new sense of perception: sight. The use of deixis results in the complete participation of the reader in the context of enunciation.

We encounter a new spatial deictic: 'questo' ('this'). 'This' is a demonstrative pronoun which implies shared knowledge between the speaker and the listener, but also coexistence in the same space: the poetic text has become a metaphoric space, similar to the spatial dimension which we know from our experience of reality. The 'reliquary' has been turned into an 'orchard' by the wind of life, now 'this solitary edge of land' ('questo lembo / di terra solitario') is transforming itself into a 'crucible' ('si trasforma [...] in un crogiuolo'). In the previous stanza the poet has chosen to use a past tense (the imperfect 'era') which, together with the spatial deictic 'qui', creates a double concept of time within the text: a time when the poem is dead and, after the arrival of the 'wind', a new temporal situation, where everything becomes alive and productive. In this stanza the poet has used a present tense, 'si trasforma', because the reader-addressee, being part of the text, is now taking part in the transformations of the metaphorical space. The space of the text is, therefore, a real 'crucible', as the concept of time, space and their interrelationship with the speaking voice and the reader-addressee are dynamic.

The concept of space really does change within this poetic text when we start reading the third stanza. A new spatial connotation is present in the text: 'l'erto muro' ('the sheer wall'). The 'rovello' (rage) is on the nearer side of the wall ('di qua dall'erto muro') where the speaking voice and the reader-addressee are placed. The wall is thus dividing two different spaces and, as the wall is high, it is implicit that the space that lies beyond the wall is not easily reached. The adverb 'di qua' (on the nearer side) therefore sets some deictic implications and, at the same time, a metaphorical image of the closed nature and difficulties of the space where man is obliged to exist. But there is some hope of salvation for the reader-addressee if he/she can carry on towards the wall, or, perhaps, carry on reading not only this poem, but the whole book, to which this text permits access.¹²

Use is made of the personal pronoun 'tu' (you) in lines 6 and 12. But, if in line 6 the reader-addressee referred to by 'tu' was listening to 'il frullo' which the speaking voice could also hear, in line 12 'tu' refers only to the addressee. The speaking voice is suggesting to the reader-addressee to proceed. So far, the use of deixis in this text has attracted the reader-addressee from somewhere outside the context into the enounced and made him/her participate in the dynamics of what is going on there. Now the deixis system is projecting the reader into what lies beyond the enounced, i.e. beyond the wall, by also promising a kind of salvation from the 'rovello' that lies in the addressee-reader's present position, i.e. within the apple orchard or the *hortus conclusus*.¹³

We encounter a new spatial deictic 'qui' (here) which is described as the place where 'si compongono ... le storie, gli atti / scancellati pel giuoco del futuro'. The spatial adverb 'qui' is not connoting the same space connoted by 'qui' in line 2. The speaking voice has been able to project the reader-addressee beyond the wall into a new space. The analysis of the system of deictics enables us to see this sudden change of spatial coordinates. The reader has been taken into a symbolical space by the speaking voice. Is it a space beyond life or simply the rest of *Ossi di seppia*, or a general space of poetic vision and composition? Perhaps the third stanza holds more definite answers to these questions.

The speaking voice prompts the reader-addressee to look for a 'broken mesh in the net / that grips us' (cerca una maglia rotta nella rete / che ci stringe). It is clear that the place connoted by 'here' is in some way unpleasant, restrictive for both the speaking voice and the reader-addressee. The use of the imperative,

'cerca' (look for), which functions as an *origo* deictic, indicates that only the reader-addressee is able to find the 'broken mesh' and, thus, to escape. In line 16 we read: '[...] tu balza fuori, fuggi' (leap out, and escape). The speaking voice, who attracts the attention of the reader-addressee at the beginning of the poem and draws him to participate in the dynamics of the text-orchard, is now advising the addressee to get out of it, to escape. The *origo* deictic 'tu' of line 16 clearly draws a distinction between the speaking voice and the addressee-reader. Whilst there is a possibility for the addressee to escape, there seems to be no way out for the speaking voice. The *ego* has been looking for a way to go beyond the wall but has obviously failed.¹⁴ The dichotomy between the *ego* and the addressee is further highlighted by the fact that the speaking voice has even prayed that at least the reader-addressee could jump out of the unpleasant place where they both seem to be prisoners: 'Va, per te l'ho pregato, - ora la sete / mi sarà lieve, meno acre la ruggine...'

The use of deixis in the fourth stanza of this poem seems to be exactly opposite to that of the previous stanzas. In the first three stanzas deixis works towards the attraction of the addressee-reader into the spatial and temporal dimensions of the poem-orchard. In this last stanza, both semantically and deictically, the speaking voice is trying to convince the addressee to depart from the 'pomario'. This seems to be a contradiction. This apparent contradiction is a proof that the spatial deictic marked by 'qui' (here) in line 3 and the spatial deictics marked by 'qui' in line 13 and 'fuori' (outside) in line 16 are referring to two different spatial dimensions. The first 'qui' of line 3 refers to a positive spatial dimension; or which has become positive as soon as the reader-addressee has brought back to it the breath of life which has turned it from the status of a reliquary to a melting pot. The other two spatial deictics refer to a more negative space which is perceived by both the speaking voice and the reader-addressee as a claustrophobic place, limited by a wall, and from which one wants to escape.

We could interpret the first spatial dimension as being the space of the poetic language which can help the reader-addressee to escape from a negative existential condition. The speaking voice has clearly succeeded in helping the reader-addressee to go beyond the 'wall' and this is understood by the new temporal deictic 'ora' (now) ('ora la sete / mi sarà pi lieve, meno acre la ruggine...'). The temporal deictic 'ora' refers to a new condition where the reader-addressee has managed to escape from the 'pomario'. 'Ora... sarà' (Now...will be) includes the present as well as the future condition of the speaking voice. Most importantly, the dots which end the poem are symbolical of continuation, they refer to what comes after, they prompt the reader-addressee to turn the page and carry on reading, thus symbolising the passage for which the speaking voice had been praying. Within the internal economy of the poem they may symbolise the repetition of the whole cycle of attraction of a new reader-addressee into the dynamics of the language and thus a new salvation. Once the reader has brought life to the poem and, thus, also to the speaking voice, he/she can make use of the poetic language to go beyond the spatial-temporal limitations to which humankind is subjected. The role of the poet, and of poetry, in general, is suggested to be that of salvation. It is clear now that 'qui' in line 13 has a second meaning: not only does it refer to the claustrophobic space from where the speaking voice and the addressee are trying to escape, but also to a more symbolical space, i.e. the space of poetic intuition and poetic vision.

6. Conclusion

In this poem the analysis of the use of deixis has proved of fundamental help in understanding what kind of relationship the speaking voice wants to establish with the reader-addressee. Such analysis has also shown further implications involved behind the use of spatial and temporal deictics. This text is indicative of the poetic themes which Montale will develop further in his poems. I believe that the study of the deictic system in 'In limine' is a first and essential step towards the comprehension of Montale's linguistic organisation which is closely connected to his philosophy of life and poetry. These conclusions draw attention to the need for a more detailed understanding and further research into the dynamics of the relationship between text and reader.

NOTES

1. All quotations from Montale's poetry are taken from *Tutte le poesie* (1987), III edizione, Giorgio Zampa (ed.), Milano: Mondadori. All translations, unless otherwise stated in a note, are taken from two works of translation: *Eugenio Montale: Selected Poems*. (1964) translated by G. Kay. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press and *Eugenio Montale: Selected Poems*. (1966) introduced and translated by G. Cambon et al. New York: New Directions.
2. For a further analysis on this point see E. Montale (1972) *Nel nostro tempo*. Milano: Rizzoli Editore, 46ff.
3. The four women addressees are traditionally conflated into Clizia (partly a fictional idealisation of the American scholar Irma Brandeis), a Peruvian woman, and two different versions of Annetta-Arletta. There are two other women who can be classified as addressees number five and six in Montale's poems: Volpe (a fictional projection of the Italian poet Maria Luisa Spaziani) and Mosca (Drusilla Tanzi, Montale's wife, present in 'Ballata scritta in una clinica' and, generally, in *Satura*). Martelli, however finds that the Montalian women have similar fictional features, therefore he is able to synthesise them into one woman figure. For further analysis of this theme see: Martelli (1977); Montale's letter to Guarnieri (1964); notes to the first edition of *Bufera e altro* (1956).
4. I have been much influenced in writing this section on deixis by Lyons (1977), (1982); Green (1992).
5. I use the term 'subjectivity' in the same sense as Lyons (1982).
6. Green (1992) proposes a new classification of the deictic categories: reference, the *origo*, time and space, the text, subjectivity, and syntax. Text deixis comprises all the elements which refer the text back to itself, including **impure textual deixis**. Subjectivity deixis accounts for the presence of modality in an utterance as modality encodes a subjective experience on the part of the encoder. Syntax deixis includes syntactic forms which have a deictic function: for instance an interrogative construction of an utterance presupposes an addressee. The final three categories will not be discussed in this section.
7. My own translation.
8. I do not totally agree with Kay's translation of line 6, where the verb 'spiare', literally 'to spy', has been translated by 'to catch'. I think that this would break the overall idea of passive observation of the surrounding world and apathy which characterises 'To laze the afternoon'.
9. See Battaglia (ed.), (1961ff) *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana*. Torino: UTET; Devoto & Oli, (1990) *Il dizionario della lingua italiana*, Firenze: Le Monnier.
10. 'In limine' from *Ossi di seppia* (1925 and 1928). The poem 'In limine' opens Montale's first book and its position within the book is *in limine* (on the threshold) to *Ossi di seppia*. Montale chose to publish the whole text in italics.
11. I suggest that 'pomario' should be translated as 'apple-tree orchard', or simply 'orchard' as the theme of the orchard is recurrent in Montale's work.
12. Brose (1984:170) sees a very close resemblance between this text and its position within *Ossi di seppia* and the text written on the door of Dante's *Inferno*.
13. With *hortus conclusus* I allude to the biblical *topos* of *locus amoenus*. For more on *hortus conclusus* in Montale's poetry see Brose (1984) and Giachery (1985).
14. The issue of why the speaking voice is not able or cannot proceed beyond the wall has been explored in West (1981), Brose (1984), Riccobono (1994).

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APPENDIX IV

Published paper: 'The Question of Liminality and the dissolution of spatio-temporal dimensions in Montale's poetry: "Sul Limite", "Vasca", and "Carnevale di Gerti" ', *The Italianist*, 17 (1997), 74-98.

The question of liminality and the dissolution of spatio-temporal dimensions in Montale's poetry: 'Sul limite', 'Vasca', and 'Carnevale di Gerti'*

Rossella Riccobono

1 Introduction

In this article my aim is to analyse liminality in terms of the organization of the deictic system so as to explore Montale's presentation of the spatio-temporal universe and its dissolution. First, I intend briefly to introduce the linguistic notion of deixis with which I analyse three of Montale's texts. Second, I single out some examples of deixis in the short story 'Sul limite' (*Farfalla di Dinard*, 1960), as well as in two poetic texts – 'Vasca' and 'Carnevale di Gerti' – in order to highlight the presence of liminal spaces or dimensions in Montale's poetry.

2 Deixis and deictic categories¹

The term 'deixis' derives from the ancient Greek word *deiktikos* which means 'indicating', 'pointing'. The term 'deixis' is used by modern linguists to refer to the function that demonstratives, personal pronouns, tenses, and other grammatical and lexical linguistic elements have in an utterance in its relation to the spatio-temporal co-ordinates of the surrounding environment.

Deixis has been recognized by Lyons as the source of reference.² It encodes grammatically and/or lexically the relationship between the speaker (of the utterance), or 'zero-point', or *origo*, and the spatio-temporal context where the utterance is encoded. It also contextualizes the interpersonal

relationship between the speaker and the hearer(s).³ Deixis involves a centre of orientation which is egocentric, because the encoder of the utterance functions as the origin of a relationship between him/herself and the surrounding cognitive environment. Deixis sets the co-ordinates of communication from the speaker's point of view, or it encodes the speaker's subjectivity.⁴ The deictic categories which are grammaticized and lexicalized in natural languages originate from the cognitive relationship between the person who produces an utterance, his/her body, the space and time (the here-and-now) where the act of utterance is enounced and the relationship between him/her and the hearer(s). Deixis can be more clearly understood if it is related to its origins in the 'canonical situation of utterance', namely, the face-to-face linguistic interaction.

I should like to present here some of the deictic terms to which I shall be referring during the course of my examination of Montale's poems. For reasons of brevity, I shall not mention other categories which are not fundamental for my discussion of Montale's poetry.⁵

i The *spatial* category of deixis includes spatial adverbs such as 'here' and 'there', direction expressions ('left', 'right', 'up', 'down', 'north', 'south', 'east', and 'west'), and also demonstrative adjectives and pronouns ('this' and 'that').

ii *Temporal* deixis includes temporal adverbs ('now', 'then', 'today', 'yesterday', 'tomorrow') and tenses.⁶ The central tense that expresses the temporal dimension of the act of utterance is the present tense. The temporal co-ordinate of the act of utterance, or *coding* time, is to be seen as separate from the time referred to in the utterance itself, or *content* time.

iii The category of deictic *reference* comprises definite referring expressions such as definite articles and pronominal expressions.

iv Finally, the *origo* category includes first and second personal pronouns, vocatives, and honorific titles.⁷ *Empathetic* deixis may be considered as a sub-category of the *origo*. It refers to those part of the speech which encode mental proximity to or distance from the *origo*.⁸

3 Between here and there:

Liminality as a third spatio-temporal dimension

From the very first poem of *Ossi di seppia*, 'In limine', the spatio-temporal dimensions created within Montale's lyric texts involve a space defined by here-and-now opposed to a space which is beyond a sheer wall: 'un rovello

è di qua dall'erto muro' ('In limine', l. 10, p. 7).⁹ The speaking voice is positioned in a claustrophobic space from which he cannot escape even though he constantly urges his addressee to jump out of the 'pomario-reliquiario' (l. 1 and l. 5, p. 7): 'Cerca una maglia rotta nella rete / che ci stringe, tu balza fuori, fuggi!' ('In limine', ll. 15-16, p. 7).¹⁰ In Montale's poetic texts, the speaking voice is spatially imprisoned by the enclosure of the 'muro d'orto' and temporally is constantly challenged by the regressing of his memory, as are the other participants in the fictitious context created by the poetic discourse. Nevertheless, Montale explains that, unlike other people, he is a *uomo che si volta* and who asks himself about the ontological meaning of existence.¹¹

The pivot of Montale's poems can be identified with the search for salvation which is, in most of his lyrics, associated with the successful relationship between himself and the hearer-addressee who can, to a certain extent, be identified with a feminine figure, with a past or possible lover with whom he can complete the philosophical journey which will free both of them. In 'Dora Markus', Dora indicates that the land to which she belongs is beyond the sea.¹² Dora's longing for her native land can be recognized as a feeling of disharmony with the surrounding spatio-temporal environment which unites the two lovers as twin souls:¹³

[...] Con un segno
della mano additavi all'altra sponda
invisibile la tua patria vera. ('Dora Markus', ll. 4-6, p. 130)

However, this relationship turns out to be impossible as the hearer-addressee is either absent or has lost her memory.¹⁴ Despite this, Montale faithfully persists in his search for salvation:

d'una fede che fu combattuta,
d'una speranza che bruciò più lenta
di un duro ceppo nel focolare. ('Piccolo testamento', ll. 10-12, p. 275)

Throughout his production Montale emphasizes the same problem in different ways by changing tone and metaphors, but fundamentally pivoting around the same question: how to defeat the spatio-temporal-historical limitations of reality. The spatial antinomy of finite and infinite, here and there, finds its philosophical counterpart in another binary opposition: the poet's frequent distinction between Necessity and Miracle.¹⁵ The search for salvation coincides with the search for the 'miracle' or the 'un-necessary' or the 'exceptional', and, consequently, with avoiding 'necessity' which finds

a qualitative ontological correspondent in the 'invariable' condition of life and death. The distances between such conflicting opposites as Necessity and Miracle become much shorter if salvation is expected to be found not in a place beyond reality, which can be seen as corresponding with emptiness or death, but in a dimension which lies between 'here' and beyond the 'sheer wall': a dimension to which I shall refer as *limen* and which corresponds to poetry itself.¹⁶ Montale adopts poetry as a means of expression in order to carry out his search into his philosophical view of life and reality: the result of this is that his poetic system can be viewed as a philosophy where '*poesis* is also *gnosis*' (Brose, p. 152).¹⁷ However his poetry-philosophy does not carry any certainty or any definite answers as regards the question of existence:

It should be stressed, however, that Montale's *gnosis* contains no intimations of any knowledge of origins or ends. It is a knowledge only of a dessicated present. Nor is there any supportive ritualization of the instructive process: Montale's liminality is terrifyingly random, accidental, aleatory. The ground beyond or below a distracted or disturbed Divinity, an oxymoric phrase that is typical of the clouding of those meager epiphanies that the poem proffers us. In most cases, the epiphany is as puzzling as the obscurity it promises to clarify. The signs are not read, the moment fades. (Brose, p. 160)

Montale's poetry makes no pretence of offering a solution to the question that it raises: 'Non chiederci la parola che squadri da ogni lato / l'animo nostro informe', and 'Non domandarci la formula che mondi possa aprirti' ('Non chiederci la parola', ll. 1-2 and 9, p. 29). Rather, it presents itself as a possible means of interpretation of reality, an indication of a possible way to the 'varco' through the phase of liminality. Reading reality, however, is not always possible, and the search for the miracle seems to be less promising than the Montalian poetic voice had hoped.

The dimension of liminality adds a third space to the universe of Montale's poetry. The Montalian text presents spatio-temporal dimensions which include a *here* as opposed to a *there*. However, this opposition is mediated by a zone-phase through which it is necessary to pass in order to go from one dimension to the other. This means that a poetic text does not only contain a dualistic spatio-temporal system, but includes a new dimension with which the reader must deal.

The theme of the *limen* is dealt with by Montale both in poetry and in his prose: for example, in 'In limine', in 'Sul limite', and in other texts. The

short story 'Sul limite' describes a journey to a zone between life and the afterlife, and depicts this, roughly speaking, as a kind of Purgatorial zone where the protagonist must purge himself before he is allowed to proceed. The protagonist of 'Sul limite', after an apparently 'stupido incidente', encounters people and animals whom he knew many years before and whom he supposes to be already dead. Through these encounters he realizes that he is dead too and that 'il solito stupido incidente' was in fact a fatal one for himself. Fictionally, the speaking voice has managed to go beyond the 'erto muro' and can therefore describe the new dimension. However, the protagonist soon discovers that the afterlife is subdivided into four zones, the first of which, a hypothetical town called 'Limite', is the place to which he is travelling. This short story offers a well-focused view of Montale's fictional idea of the dimensions beyond the 'erto muro'. It is thus worth analysing in detail by concentrating on the images of direction and changes of direction.

4 The Purgatory of 'Sul limite': A journey backwards in order to go forward

The fictional journey into liminality is 'il viaggio' ('Sul limite', p. 222) to which the narrator refers retrospectively in the opening sentence of the short story. The fact that the journey is presented to the reader as already experienced is clarified by the definite article 'il' which functions as deictic of reference. This journey, as the narrator explains, was preceded by a car accident ('il solito stupido incidente': p. 222) which seems to be irrelevant to the narrator while it is happening, but is pivotal to the progression of the whole narration. As a matter of fact, it is after the accident that the first changes in the spatio-temporal dimension can be first noticed: 'Dopo un tempuscolo che parve eterno seguì un cozzo...' (p. 222). The word 'tempuscolo' can best be translated as 'an insignificant lapse of time'; however, the apparently insignificant period of time is perceived as 'eternal'. After this sentence the temporal dimension seems to lose its conventional boundaries. Furthermore, after this same sentence, the spatial dimension becomes anonymous as the areas of the city to which the narrator was travelling in the taxi are no longer named. Previously the streets and the squares were named and therefore could be recognized by the reader familiar with Milan: 'Avevo lasciato una casa di amici, in via della Carra' (p. 222); 'speravo di raggiungere piazza Beccaria' (p. 222); 'La macchina attraversava il Prato' (p. 222). After the accident, no further names are

mentioned except for 'la Porta' (p. 223) (but the gate is not specified) and, later, 'Limite' (p. 225).

After the accident the narrator-protagonist decides to carry on his journey to 'piazza Beccaria' by tram, but when the tram arrives at the terminus, 'una tettoia di legno' (p. 223), he realizes that the direction in which he has travelled is exactly the opposite to the one in which he was hoping to go:

ebbi il tempo di spolverarmi alla meglio la giacca, di toccarmi per sentire s'ero vivo e di saltare su un tranvai che passava a poca distanza. Il tranvai era semivuoto, tutti scesero alla Porta, e anche il bigliettaio, per fumare; tuttavia il veicolo ripartì abbastanza veloce, senza di lui, e dopo pochi minuti mi accorsi ch'ero arrivato alla periferia della città, in senso perfettamente contrario alla destinazione che speravo di toccare. Giunti presso una tettoia di legno, – Qui finisce la corsa – mi disse il conduttore invitandomi a scendere. ('Sul limite', p. 223)

It is at this point in the development of the text that further temporal and spatial irregularities start to occur: 'Era primavera ma faceva già caldo. Dovevano essere le sei del pomeriggio, a giudicare dalla luce. Strano, avrei supposto che fosse molto più tardi. Mi tastai per cercar l'orologio quando...' (p. 223). The reader is not informed of what time it was when the protagonist caught the taxi before the car accident, however both the protagonist and the reader get the impression that time has stopped or, at least, is no longer relevant to the story. The time is not checked by the protagonist who no longer seems to worry about it. The concept of time appears to have been annihilated, as the concept of space has become anonymous: 'La campagna intorno era incolore e da lontano appariva un gruppo di case bianchissime' (p. 226); 'Gli alberi delle campagne erano bassi e uniformi e il sole pareva fermo sull'orizzonte' (p. 227).

The protagonist is met by three characters belonging to his past, Nicola, Pinocchietto, and Galiffa, who are to escort him to Limite so that he can view the film of his life and meet another person of his past, Giovanna. It is at this point that the protagonist starts to realize that he is dead, or alive, as soon Nicola corrects him:

– Giovanna – confermò Nicola avviando il somarello fra alcune ricche piantagioni che parevano di ricino. – È anche lei a Limite, e trova modo di occuparsi persino dello Zoo.

- Morta? – arrischiavi a occhi bassi traballando sul sedile angusto. E aspiravi un mozzicone di sigaretta che mi parve stranamente insapore.
- E... sta bene?
- Viva – ammonì seccamente; – o meglio, anche per lei il guanto s'è rovesciato; come per me, come per te. Di' pur morta se credi. ('Sul limite', p. 226)

Life is the other face of death and, more precisely, what we conventionally call 'life', really constitutes death. The protagonists of this short story have acquired life now that they are in the 'Limite' area. Before, when they were in the 'Antelimito', they were dead:

- T'ha fatto un certo effetto, eh? – ghignò Nicola con un'allegria che pareva sforzata.
- Lo so, la prima volta si è ancora attaccati alle storie di prima. È come accadeva a me quand'ero tra i vivi, che dico?, tra i morti dell'Antelimito da cui tu giungi ora; sognavo e al risveglio ricordavo ancora il sogno, poi anche quella memoria si perdeva. ('Sul limite', p. 226)

However, as the 'Antelimito', namely, life, is only an antechamber to the real life, namely, life after death, so Limite is the antechamber to the next zones where the dematerialization process begins, and where the terrestrial memory is progressively put to sleep and a new memory takes its place. In this way the 'Antelimito' coincides with a stage of potential life, the embryonic stage of a person's life. On the other hand, Zones II and III correspond to the stage of full activity of one's personality. It is in Zone II that the 'istituto delle entelechie superiori' (p. 227) is located: 'e Giovanna è preziosa come interprete. Ha sempre avuto una *bosse* spiccatissima per le lingue, e ti assicuro che qui ce n'è gran bisogno. Certo a Zona II ci sarà molto da fare per lei, all'istituto delle entelechie superiori dove comincia il processo di smaterializzazione' (p. 227).

Entelechy is an Aristotelian word and refers to reality which has reached its fullest degree of development.¹⁹ This means that people at Limite are still waiting to reach the full development of their existence.²⁰ Limite represents a zone of liminality where each of its characters (including animals) are getting ready for dematerialization into the dimensions beyond the 'erto muro', into real existence in its fullest form or essence. The spatio-temporal dimensions which characterize conventional existence have been annihilated once the 'Antelimito' has been left behind. Limite is the

next stage after the dissolution of reality, and Zones I, II, and III coincide with a further dissolution of memories, of forms into superior entelechies.

From the beginning, the whole story deals with a journey, first by taxi, then by tram, and, finally, by carriage. However, the journey by tram takes the protagonist in the opposite direction from where he was heading. It could therefore be claimed that from the ride on the tram onwards the protagonist has been on an anti-journey. When it is made clear that life is death and death is life, the terms referring to the journey can be revised. After the car accident the protagonist is on his journey, and it was before the accident that he was travelling in the wrong direction. The journey to Limite, in the company of Nicola, Galiffa, and Pinocchietto, is taking the protagonist back to face his past in order to come to terms with it, and so be able to proceed further to Zones I, II, and III. Confronting his past is a necessary step in order to be able to shed his terrestrial memory and then reach the full degree of development of his real essence beyond physical death.

Linguistic signs of the change of direction can be traced through the text after the car accident occurs. A series of verbs starting with the prefix 're-' can indicate either an action repeated from the beginning, or an action opposed to another action, as for instance 'to return' is the opposite of 'to go'. The use of the verbal prefix 're-' in the economy of 'Sul limite' can signify either or both notions at the same time depending on the context. When the tram leaves the protagonist at the terminus, the vehicle 'ripartì vuoto' (p. 223), obviously in the opposite direction. Later, when the two old friends meet, Nicola asks the protagonist: 'Non mi riconosci?' (p. 224). The verb *riconoscere* can be divided into *ri-conoscere*, thereby suggesting two meanings at the same time: 'remember' but also 'know again'. Both meanings are embedded in the verb *riconoscere*. As a matter of fact, the main character of the short story is forced to remember his past, but at the same time to face it again and deal with it, so that he can come to terms with his past life.

Further instances of words containing the prefix 're-' are present in 'Sul limite': 'L'asinello e il cagnolino mi leccavano le mani dando vivaci segni di riconoscimento' (p. 224-25); 'quando ho sentito il tuo nome mi son fatto girare il film della tua vita. L'avevo già ripassato altre volte, perché era inciso e completo fino ad oggi' (p. 225); 'Fufi e Gastoncino, Passepoil e Bubù, Buck e la Valentina... Non temere, potrai rivederli tutti' (p. 225); 'Poi riapersi gli occhi e vidi che il calessino...' (p. 226); 'Giovanna ti farà vedere la "registrazione" di quella che hai chiamato la tua vita, stenterai a

“riconoscerla” (pp. 226-27); ‘Non si potrebbe rimandare questa faccenda? questo incontro, dico?’ (p. 228); ‘Non posso ricominciare, Nicola, non posso, portami da mia madre... se c’è’ (p. 229); and, finally, ‘Era troppo comodo dimenticare. Riprendi a vivere come noi... giunti prima di te’ (p. 229). The many verbs preceded by the prefix ‘re-’ can be considered spatial deictics in some cases and temporal deictics in others. Their common function is that of ‘deviating’ the conventional direction of the journey ‘life-dissolution into death’ into ‘death-dissolution into life’, where physical death is seen as the turning point which leads to real existence. Deictic elements which are opposed or refer to opposition of directions, both in time and space, seem to be present in proximity to or within the dimension of liminality. At the very beginning of Montale’s production, in ‘In limine’, the speaking voice invites the addressee to take part in the dynamics of the ‘pomario-reliquiario’ through a series of imperatives: ‘Godi se il vento ch’entra nel pomario / vi rimena l’ondata della vita’ (ll. 1-2, p. 7); ‘vedi che si trasforma questo lembo / di terra solitario in un crogiuolo’ (ll. 8-9, p. 7). However, at the end of the poem the same poetic persona asks the addressee-reader to get out of the orchard, to escape, but in a different direction: ‘Cerca una maglia rotta nella rete / che ci stringe, tu balza fuori, fuggi!’ (ll. 15-16, p. 7). Both the journey through ‘Limite’ and the poem ‘In limine’ can be seen to have the same function: to oblige the traveller to go through their ‘morto / viluppo di memorie’ (‘In limine’, ll. 3-4, p. 7) in order for them to become alive and transform the ‘reliquiario’ into a ‘crogiuolo’, a space of poetic creation, but also of full development of their real essence. In the same way, the use of the prefix ‘re-’ in the language of ‘Sul limite’ urges the protagonist to revisit his past, his ‘morto / viluppo di memorie’, in order to proceed to Limite and beyond, in search of the truthful plenitude of his existence.

5 ‘Vasca’

Passò sul tremulo vetro
 un riso di belladonna fiorita,
 di tra le rame urgevano le nuvole,
dal fondo ne riassommava
 la vista fioccosa e sbiadita.
 Alcuno di noi tirò un ciottolo
 che ruppe la tesa lucente:

le molli parvenze s'infransero.
 Ma ecco, c'è altro che striscia
 a fior della spera rifatta liscia: 10
 di erompere non ha virtù,
vuol vivere e non sa come;
 se lo guardi si stacca, torna in giù:
è nato e morto, e non ha avuto un nome.

The first deictic which is encountered on reading this poem is the definite article 'il' (part of the articulated preposition 'sul') which functions as deictic of reference and refers to the reflecting surface of the pond ('sul tremulo vetro', l. 1, p. 74). The surface of the pond by metonymy represents the whole pond. At the same time, the surface reflects the surroundings of the pond and that is all that can be seen of the pond itself: what is under the water remains unknown. A few lines later, there is another deictic of reference: another definite article embedded in the articulated preposition 'dal', which refers to 'fondo': 'dal fondo ne riassommava / la vista fioccosa e sbiadita' (ll. 4-5, p. 74). The bottom of the pond, however, also reflects the surroundings of the pond. This means that the volume of space between the surface and the bottom of the pond has been deleted and the whole pond is described simply as a reflecting surface. The description of reality is represented as a reflection on the pond's surface: it is represented as a two-dimensional reality, a mere projection on to a screen.²¹ The surface of the pond serves as a metaphor for existence itself, a projection onto a screen – the screen of the speaking voice's memory, which is suddenly shattered by a stone: 'alcuno di noi tirò un ciottolo / che ruppe la tesa lucente' (ll. 6-7, p. 74).²²

The various verbs in the past historic – the tense which is used throughout the first stanza – have a temporal deictic function and represent the only dynamic presence (except for the 'noi' of the poetic voice) in a flat, two-dimensional existential reality. The sequence of past historic tenses ('Passò', 'tirò', 'ruppe', and 's'infransero'), nevertheless, prepares for the destruction of the two-dimensional reflection of reality which is but a false image of existence. The stone thrown into the water has shattered the glass-like surface of the pond and created a 'maglia rotta' into a reality beyond the spatio-temporal 'rete che ci stringe' ('In limine', ll. 15-16, p. 7). The crystallized dimension created by the use of the past historic in the previous lines has been broken together with the two-dimensional spatial co-ordinates, and a present, more dynamic, temporal dimension has taken

over. As the false screen of existence disappears, a new dimension becomes apparent, the depth of the pond and what lies beneath its surface.

The second stanza of the poem presents spatio-temporal dimensions which are totally different from those of the first one. The adverb 'ecco' (l. 9, p. 74) has a strong deictic function in indicating spatial dimension, or attracting the attention towards some new element present within the context of the situation. As a matter of fact, the attention of the reader is attracted towards some new presence within the poem. However, this new presence is not named nor defined, but is simply referred to by the pronoun 'altro' which not only maintains its anonymity, but connotes it as something other than what was seen before on the pond's surface: namely, as something different from the apparent reflection of reality.²³ The surface of the pond has now become calm again, and attention is drawn to it again by the deictic of reference 'della' which refers to 'spera'. But 'altro' is crawling just under the surface. All the actions and descriptions are now in the present tense: 'c'è' (l. 9, p. 74), 'striscia' (l. 9, p. 74), 'non ha virtù' (l. 11, p. 74), 'vuol vivere' (l. 12, p. 74), 'non sa come' (l. 12, p. 74), 'si stacca' (l. 13, p. 74), 'torna in giù' (l. 13, p. 74). The use of the present tense allows us to perceive the events described in the poem as they evolve. In this way, in the second stanza, both space and time are given a depth, a further dimension which was not present in the first stanza. To the linear, horizontal movement, which was described in line 1 by 'passò' and in line 9 by 'striscia', which is the movement along or across a surface, a vertical movement, namely, through volumes, has been added. The two verbs which describe this vertical movement are 'erompere' and 'tornare' followed by the spatial adverb 'in giù'.²⁴ At the same time, the observational mode marked by the use of the past historic, which characterized the first stanza, has changed into a participation mode. While in the first stanza the poetic persona was merely observing life on a glass-like screen, in the second stanza the switch to the present tense marks not a physical participation in the unknown entity's actions, but an emotional one, a feeling of empathy towards it. The switch from past historic to present tense can be seen to function as a mark of empathetic deixis. The entity, described as something else, is looking for a 'maglia rotta' in the surface of the pond in order to break out and come into existence. However, not having found a 'varco' out of its existential cage, it sinks back downwards.

In the second stanza, the flat, two-dimensional organization of time, space, and movement has been transformed into more complex dimensions: space has assumed three-dimensional co-ordinates, time has become more

dynamic and is viewed in its unfolding, movement which was linear has become non-linear. After the shattering of the glass-like surface and of the superficial appearance of reality, the identifiable speaking voice has for a moment seen beyond the surface and has found a way of breaking the mesh in the spatio-temporal net. It has managed to see beyond the surface of reality. What he has seen is the attempt of an unnamed entity to break out of its existential dimensions. 'Vasca' is constructed on the basis of a *mise-en-abîme*. In the first stanza the speaking voice manages to see through the superficial appearance of reality, while in the second stanza another entity tries to break out of its reality. This structure gives rise to a mirror-imaging relationship between the two stanzas, as if the reflecting pond surface were actually placed between them. However, the unnamed entity does not manage to break through, and is therefore destined to disappear back to the bottom of the pond-poem. After the failure and the disappearance of the unnamed entity, the past tense returns in the narration of the events: 'è nato e morto e non ha avuto un nome' (l. 14, p. 74). Time becomes crystallized again, which means that it loses the dynamism which it had acquired in the previous lines.²⁵ At this point the two-dimensional co-ordinates are restored and the momentary vision beyond the surface of existence has vanished. The potentiality of life represented by the 'unnamed entity' has failed to find an identity, and, therefore, as Rebecca West would say, it has dissolved into unnameability.²⁶

The *limen*, as a third spatio-temporal co-ordinate, is present in 'Vasca'. It coincides more precisely, first, with the momentary fusion of the two-dimensional spatial co-ordinates of the pond's surface into a space which also contains a depth, and, then, with the momentary fusion of a crystallized past tense into a more dynamic and evolving present tense which allows the poetic voice to take part in the unfolding of the events. This momentary fusion of the two-dimensional reality into a 'crogiuolo' (ll. 7-13) and its return to being a mere surface where only linear movement is permitted are brought about by deictics present within the language of the text: these have been recognized as the verbs 'erompere' and 'torna in giù' which highlight the idea of opposite direction in proximity of liminality.

6 'Carnevale di Gerti'

Se la ruota s'impiglia nel groviglio
delle stelle filanti ed il cavallo

s'impenna tra la calca, se ti nevica
 sui capelli e le mani un lungo brivido
 d'iridi trascorrenti o alzano i bimbi 5
 le flebili ocarine che salutano
 il tuo viaggio ed i lievi echi si sfaldano
 giù dal ponte sul fiume,
 se si sfolla la strada e ti conduce
 in un mondo soffiato entro una tremula 10
 bolla d'aria e di luce dove il sole
 saluta la tua grazia – hai ritrovato
 forse la strada che tentò un istante
 il piombo fuso a mezzanotte quando
finì l'anno tranquillo senza spari. 15
 Ed ora vuoi sostare dove un filtro
fa spogli i suoni
 e ne deriva i sorridenti ed acri
 fumi che ti compongono il domani:
 ora chiedi il paese dove gli onagri 20
 mordano quadri di zucchero alle tue mani
 e i tozzi alberi spuntino germogli
 miracolosi al becco dei pavoni.
 (Oh il tuo Carnevale sarà più triste
 stanotte anche del mio, chiusa fra i doni 25
tu per gli assenti: carri dalle tinte
 di rosolio, fantocci ed archibugi,
 palle di gomma, arnesi da cucina
 lillipuziani: l'urna li segnalava
 a ognuno dei lontani amici l'ora 30
 che il Gennaio si schiuse e nel silenzio
si compì il sortilegio. È Carnevale
 o il Dicembre s'indugia ancora? Penso
 che se tu muovi la lancetta al piccolo
 orologio che rechi al polso, tutto 35
 arretrerà dentro un disfatto prisma
 babelico di forme e di colori...
 E il Natale verrà e il giorno dell'Anno
 che sfolla le caserme e ti riporta
 gli amici spersi, e questo Carnevale 40
 pur esso tornerà che ora ci sfugge

tra i muri che si fendono già. Chiedi
tu di fermare il tempo sul paese
 che attorno si dilata? Le grandi ali
 screziate ti sfiorano, le logge 45
 sospingono all'aperto esili bambole
 bionde, vive, le pale dei mulini
 rotano fisse sulle pozze garrule.
Chiedi di trattenere le campane
 d'argento sopra il borgo e il suono rauco 50
 delle colombe? Chiedi tu i mattini
 trepidi delle tue prode lontane?
 Come tutto si fa strano e difficile,
 come tutto è impossibile, tu dici.
La tua vita è quaggiù dove rimbombano 55
 le ruote dei carriaggi senza posa
 e nulla torna se non forse in questi
 disguidi del possibile. Ritorna
là fra i morti balocchi ove è negato
 pur morire; e col tempo che ti batte 60
 al polso e all'esistenza ti ridona,
 tra le mura pesanti che non s'aprono
 al gorgo degli umani affaticato,
torna alla via dove con te intristisco,
quella che additò un piombo raggelato 65
 alle mie, alle tue sere:
torna alle primavere che non fioriscono.

Opposition of movements and the breach of the conventional spatio-temporal laws of physics are elements which can also be observed in 'Carnevale di Gerti' (1928). The very first image which the reader encounters is that of 'la ruota' which 's'impiglia nel groviglio / delle stelle filanti' (ll. 1-2, p. 124). It is not described as a wheel, but the wheel: the use of the definite article functions as a deictic of reference and the wheel is almost automatically compared to another wheel, that of time. The image, therefore, suggests a sudden stopping of the continuous and inexorable forward movement of time. The circular movement of the wheel comes to a stop. A series of related images follows; not images, however, which connote a sudden halting of time or movement, but images which evoke events out of the ordinary: 'ed il cavallo / s'impenna tra la calca' (ll. 2-3,

p. 124); 'se ti nevica / sui capelli e le mani un lungo brivido / d'iridi trascorrenti' (ll. 3-5, p. 124); 'o alzano i bimbi / le flebili ocarine che salutano / il tuo viaggio' (ll. 5-7, p. 124); 'se si sfolla la strada e ti conduce / in un mondo soffiato entro una tremula / bolla d'aria' (ll. 9-11, p. 124). As the hypothetical construction introduced by the conjunction 'Se' makes clear, all these images are presented as a deviation from what is normal, and all are signs that perhaps some new or forgotten dimension may replace the existing one. At the same time, the concreteness of the images is underlined. They are accompanied by definite articles which grant precision to and familiarize the scene – a street during the celebration of Carnival – for both the poetic voice and for the addressee.

In line 12 the verb in the perfect tense 'hai ritrovato' does not function as a time deictic, as this action is part of the apodosis, and so the temporal situation is still comprised in the hypothetical period. Nevertheless, it can be noted that between the protasis and the apodosis the poet has decided to use a dash, rather than a comma. A dash is a punctuation mark which signifies a longer and more significant pause between the structures which it both separates and unites. Although the first stanza of the poem can be seen as a very long hypothetical sentence, and therefore referring to a hypothetical situation, I would argue that, on account of the presence of the dash, the normal relationship between the protasis and the apodosis has been changed. It is possible to imagine that one of the hypothetical situations described by the protasis has occurred, and that 'la strada che tentò un istante / il piombo fuso a mezzanotte' (ll. 13-14, p. 124) has been found again. In such circumstances, the verb 'hai ritrovato' in the apodosis of the hypothetical sentence can be viewed as a temporal deictic. In other words, the temporal co-ordinates are clarified from line 12 onwards. The temporal co-ordinate is set in the present, 'hai ritrovato', by a perfect tense referring to a present situation. The present dimension is, however, immediately reconnected to a past situation, that of the end of the year, 'quando / finì l'anno tranquillo senza spari' (ll. 14-15, p. 124), New Year's Eve 1927 when, as Montale himself explains, he and some friends, amongst whom Gerti, had tried the experiment with the molten lead.²⁷

The perfect tense, 'hai ritrovato' (l. 12, p. 124), and the past historic tense, 'tentò' (l. 13, p. 124) and 'finì' (l. 15, p. 124), set the temporal co-ordinate of the text's fictional context. At the same time these tenses function as vehicles for a different temporal situation: that of the shift into Gerti's private world. Within the structure of 'Carnevale di Gerti', reality is deviated twice: from the real occasion which inspired the poem (New Year's

Eve 1927) to a fictional context (the text itself), and then to another deviation of the fictional poetic text. The temporal deictics anchor the text to a temporal co-ordinate, but, at the same time, dislocate it onto another mental, personal dimension, that of Gerti's internal world. The passage into Gerti's internal spatio-temporal co-ordinates is indicated by the spatial adverb 'dove' (l. 16, p. 124), by the temporal adverb 'ora' (l. 16 and l. 20, p. 124), and by the use of the present tenses 'vuoi sostare' (l. 16, p. 124), 'fa spogli' (l. 17, p. 124), 'ne deriva' (l. 18, p. 124), 'ti compongono' (l. 19, p. 124), 'chiedi' (l. 20, p. 124). If the second stanza can be viewed as coinciding with Gerti's internal world defined by spatio-temporal co-ordinates of its own, then it is reasonable to seek for the passage into this world in the first stanza. This occurs in the very first line of the first stanza: the image of the wheel stopping recalls similar images which identify liminality in 'La casa dei doganieri' and 'Fuscello teso dal muro'.²⁸

From the third stanza on, the poetic voice puts itself on the same level as the addressee: the second person pronoun 'tu' (l. 26, p. 124) and the second person possessive adjective 'tuo' (l. 24, p. 124) appear together with the first person possessive adjective 'del mio' (l. 25, p. 124). The poetic *persona* and the addressee are united in a twinship of destinies, except that the addressee's destiny is even sadder than that of the poetic voice: 'Oh il tuo Carnevale sarà più triste / stanotte anche del mio' (ll. 24-25, p. 124). The temporal adverb 'stanotte' sets the temporal co-ordinate to a conventional time measurement which refers to a different time co-ordinate from that set by the adverb 'ora' (l. 16, p. 124) in the previous stanza. The whole of the third stanza is written within brackets: this may be a sufficient sign to show that it refers to a different perception of the spatio-temporal context of situation from the previous stanza. In the second stanza the addressee had entered an individual dimension of existence, separated from reality by a filter which 'fa spogli i suoni / e ne deriva i sorridenti ed acri / fumi che ti compongono il domani' (ll. 17-19, p. 124), and the reader had followed the addressee into this same world. In the third stanza, the poetic voice's perspective, linked to conventional spatio-temporal co-ordinates, is finally disclosed together with the explicit use of first person *origo* deictics. The third stanza can therefore be seen as a commentary on Gerti's mental journey into her individual time, into a possible deviation of reality, where ordinary conventions no longer matter. However, the poetic voice's comment on this journey assumes a note of pain and of sympathy towards Gerti, as reality, the Carnival, will be a sad event for both of them. However, it will be even sadder for Gerti, as in her mental world, which is destined to

burst like a 'tremula / bolla d'aria' (ll. 10-11, p. 124), the gifts she has prepared are for 'gli assenti' (l. 26, p. 124) whom she hopes to find in her private regression of time.

The confusion of time which is made explicit in the blurring between past and present is created by the use of two present tenses: 'È Carnevale / o il Dicembre s'indugia ancora?' (ll. 32-33, p. 125).²⁹ The first present tense refers to the content time which is identical to the coding time (in the sense that the context is encoded the day of the Carnival); the second present tense refers to a content time which precedes the coding time, namely, New Year's Eve, the night when the molten lead was interpreted: 'l'ora / che il Gennaio si schiuse e nel silenzio / si compì il sortilegio' (ll. 30-32, p. 125). The gap between the two content times is clarified by the use of the two past historic tenses in connection with New Year's day 'si schiuse' and 'si compì'. The blurring between the past and present, or the objective time in the fictional context and Gerti's private time, is underlined by the use of the present tense in connection with both moments. Once more, after the image of the wheel in the first stanza, a new image of circular movement, a watch, is presented as an instrument of the deviation of time: 'se tu muovi la lancetta al piccolo / orologio che tu rechi al polso, tutto / arretrerà' (ll. 34-36, p. 125).

In lines 33-34 the poetic voice seems to succumb to the journey into a common (to both itself and the addressee) personal time – the time when both of them, fictionally, tried the molten-lead experiment. The image of the watch in lines 34-36 can thus be seen as an instrument of the deviation of temporal possibility for both the poetic voice and the addressee. The spell ('il sortilegio') has been cast on both participants in the context of situation, but only for a moment. In the fourth stanza there is a sudden change from the person deictic 'ti' in line 39 to 'ci' in line 41. Later, in line 42, the second person singular deictics return. The person deictic 'ci' in line 39 is, so far, the only linguistic proof that the speaking voice has lost himself within the timeless flow of past, present, and future. In a way, the poetic voice has entered liminality for a very brief time, whilst the addressee had entered it right at the beginning of the poem, when the wheel became entangled in the streamers.

Beginning in line 42 the addressee is again alone in her concept of time and space: the images now focus on the crystallization of the time and space which are taking shape around Gerti. This is reflected by the use of the present tenses 'chiedi' (l. 42, p. 125), 'si dilata' (l. 44, p. 125), 'ti sfiorano' (l. 45, p. 125), 'sospingono' (l. 46, p. 125), and 'rotano' (l. 48, p. 125) which contain the here-and-now of Gerti's mental context of situation. However,

while the addressee is striving not to allow this mental state to disappear thereby leaving 'reality' in its place, other images in the fourth stanza focus on the continuous flow of time which cannot be stopped even within the hallucinated 'bolla d'aria e di luce' (l. 11, p. 124) in which the addressee is floating. These are the sinister images of 'le grandi ali / screziate' (ll. 44-45, p. 125) which skim over Gerti's skin, the 'esili bambole / bionde, vive' (ll. 46-47, p. 125), and the 'pale dei mulini' (l. 47, p. 125) which 'rotano fisse sulle pozze garrule' (l. 48, p. 125). The presents which Gerti had prepared for 'gli assenti' have now turned into living objects which underline the climax of Gerti's imagined world, but, at the same time, their images denote a world which does not offer any answer or any new start to Gerti's destiny, only a repetitive and hallucinated world which is just as empty and mechanical as the one she has momentarily left. This is made clear by the wind-vanes which spin around reminding the reader of the workings of a clock. Gerti's mental state within the bubble of air cannot last, the bubble is destined to burst, and this happens soon enough in the fifth and last stanza of this poem.

In the final stanza the tense used is still the present, but now in connection with a quite different spatio-temporal situation. In line 55 the spatial co-ordinates are specified: the adverb 'quaggiù' defines, by contrast, a fall from the heights of Gerti's mental world, back down to 'reality' where the 'normal', linear function of time has been restored: 'rimbombano / le ruote dei carriaggi senza posa' (ll. 55-56, p. 125); 'nulla torna' (l. 57, p. 125); 'col tempo che ti batte / al polso e all'esistenza ti ridona' (ll. 60-61, p. 125). However, in lines 57-58 reference is made again to the deviation of existence by a demonstrative adjective of proximity: 'questi / disguidi del possibile' (ll. 57-58, p. 125). This creates an apparent contradiction with the fact that the speaking voice, after a momentary journey with Gerti into a world where the ticking of time had stopped, has come back into time-bound existence, as is confirmed by the use of the spatial adverb 'quaggiù'. The use of a demonstrative adjective of proximity suggests that even the speaking voice, in a final attempt to make his own the 'disguido del possibile' (l. 58, p. 125), is not wholly trying to get back to the 'normal' level of existence. This is further confirmed by the use of the distal spatial adverb 'là' (l. 59, p. 125) which defines the spatial co-ordinate where the speaking voice is inviting the addressee to return: 'Ritorna / là fra i morti balocchi' (ll. 58-59, p. 125). It is clear, at this point, that both the speaking voice and the addressee are momentarily still part of the hallucinated mental projection of a private existence. The real passage to the 'normal' concept of existence takes place

when the 'normal' function of time is resumed in lines 60-61: 'e col tempo che ti batte / al polso e all'esistenza ti ridona' (p. 125).

It is worth noticing that throughout the text some of the verbs used by the speaking voice contain the prefix 'ri-' which, as has been seen in the analysis of 'Sul limite', can be interpreted as formal-semantic signs of closeness to liminality. In line 12 the verb 'ritrovare' is used; later in line 39 we find the verb 'riportare'; in lines 41, 57, 64, and 67 the verb *tornare* does not need the prefix 'ri-' to suggest the meaning of 'back(wards)' or 'again', although the verb *ritornare* is used as a variant in line 58. In line 61 the verb *ridonare* is found. I should like to suggest that in all the instances in which these verbs are used they refer, just as in 'Sul limite', to the entrance into or exit from liminality. The 'normal' function of time in 'Carnevale di Gerti' becomes null from the first line, and precisely from the image of the wheel stopping because it is stuck in the streamers. Liminality can, in this poem, be interpreted as an exit from the linear concept of time into a cyclical idea of time and existence, where humanity is no longer constrained into one unchangeable direction of existence, but has the power or possibility to go back and start again or even to vary the nature of existence.

The first line where the linear concept of time is re-established is line 55 where the spatial dislocation 'quaggiù' takes both the speaking voice and the addressee back down to 'reality', and where the ticking of time starts again. The use of the verbs prefixed by 'ri-' now refers to the passage from the zone of liminality back into 'reality', the moment in which the addressee is given back to 'existence' by the resuming of the function of time: 'e col tempo che ti batte / al polso e all'esistenza ti ridona' (ll. 60-61, p. 125). The verbs containing the prefix 'ri-' either formally or semantically can be enclosed within the deictic system of this poem as they indicate spatio-temporal directions and dislocations referring to liminality. However, in order for them to be interpreted correctly, they must be analysed in close connection with the spatio-temporal shifters, such as adverbs, the use of tenses, etc.³⁰

Finally, I should like to focus on the behaviour of person deictics in the last stanza of 'Carnevale di Gerti'. I have said that the poetic voice is momentarily lost in Gerti's mental world, and that this is highlighted by the use of two deictic categories: a temporal deictic and a person deictic. In the third stanza the poetic persona refers to New Year's Eve by using the past historic tense: 'si schiuse' (l. 31, p. 125) and 'si compì' (l. 32, p. 125). Later, reference is made to Carnival and December by use of a present tense: 'È Carnevale / o il Dicembre s'indugia ancora?' (ll. 32-33, p. 125). This creates

a blurring between past and present in the poetic voice's concept of time. Later, in line 41, the first person plural pronoun 'ci', which functions as a person deictic, is embedded within a series of second person singular pronouns 'ti' or 'tu', which marks the momentary common experience for both the poetic voice and the addressee. On analysing the fifth stanza, it becomes clear that the poetic voice has now landed back in the 'normal' dimension of existence where time has started to flow again and where space is defined as being 'quaggiù'. The poetic voice is inviting the addressee to come back down into reality by the use of the imperatives 'ritorna' (l. 58, p. 125) and 'torna' (l. 64 and l. 67, p. 126) – to come back to where Gerti's life is meant to be, 'la tua vita è quaggiù' (l. 55, p. 125), and where the poetic voice's life is meant to be too: 'torna alla vita dove con te intristisco, / quella che additò un piombo raggelato / alle mie, alle tue sere' (ll. 64-66, p. 126). Both the speaking voice and the addressee belong to the same race 'al gorgo degli umani affaticato' (l. 63, p. 126).³¹ Their destinies are tied together in a bond of twinship, and this is made clear by the use of personal deictics in lines 64 and 66: 'con te intristisco' (l. 64, p. 126), where the poetic voice and the addressee are made part of the same spatio-temporal co-ordinates by the present tense, and 'alle mie, alle tue sere' (l. 66, p. 126). In the last line, the expression 'le primavere che non fioriscono' (l. 67, p. 126), where 'primavere' rhymes with 'sere', contains a strong opposition which originates from the use of an oxymoron: spring should bloom, as the symbol of a new start after the winter. However the poetic voice's and the addressee's springs do *not* bloom as they are both constrained by a mono-directional flow of time. In this sense their springs look more like evenings, namely, they assume the characteristics of the end of something (the day in this case) as opposed to what they should signify: the beginning of a new existence or the cyclical return to a previous state of existence.

It is clear, then, that in the fifth and last stanza the use of the *origo* category of deixis offers linguistic proof that Gerti's private experience of Carnival has come to an end. Her attempt to operate a fusion of time is abruptly given up between the fourth and fifth stanzas: as in the molten lead experiment, the partially fused sequence of past, present, and future must recrystallize into form.³² The whole of the white magic experiment operated by Gerti in attempting to melt reality and the whole dynamics of the poem can, therefore, be recognized in the metaphor of the 'piombo fuso' (l. 14, p. 124) whose recrystallized pattern indicates an earthbound common destiny which both Montale and Gerti are obliged to follow.³³

7 Conclusion

The analysis of 'Sul limite' has given us some linguistic tools which have proved to be useful in the interpretation of both 'Vasca' and 'Carnevale di Gerti'. In 'Vasca' verbs indicating images of opposition of movement have been recognized as the means by which to indicate the rupture of a two-dimensional reality into a momentary vision of a three-dimensional existence. In 'Carnevale di Gerti' the image of the 'ruota [che] s'impiglia nel groviglio / delle stelle filanti' (ll. 1-2, p. 124) creates the occasion for Gerti and the poetic voice to see the conventional spatio-temporal co-ordinates 'dilate' into a personal concept of existence: 'chiedi / tu di fermare il tempo sul paese / che attorno si dilata?' (ll. 42-44, p. 125). At the end of the poem it is the re-installation of the circular movement of another wheel, that of Gerti's watch, which brings both speaker and addressee back to their everyday spatio-temporal situation 'tra le mura pesanti che non s'aprono' (l. 62, p. 125). In both poems the momentary vision of the Miracle is linguistically marked by the use of verbs which refer to an escape from Necessity. Return to Necessity is, however, unavoidable. The spell is soon broken, the moment of vision fades, and further verbs, semantically bearing the same amount of violence, bring the discourse back to reality: such verbs contain the prefix 'ri-' which functions as a deictic element. As we have seen, through the examination of Montale's use of deixis it has been possible to identify some linguistic signs which indicate entrance to and/or exit from liminality.

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Notes

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¹ On deixis, see: K. Bühler, *Sprachtheorie* (Jena, Fisher, 1934; reprinted Stuttgart, Fisher, 1965); J. Lyons, *Semantics* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977); K. Bühler, 'The Deictic Field of Language and Deictic Words', in *Speech, Place and Action: Studies in*

Deixis and Related Topics, edited by R. J. Jarvella and W. Klein (Chichester, John Wiley, 1982), pp. 9-30; S. Levinson, *Pragmatics* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983); *Essays on Deixis*, edited by G. Rauh (Tübingen, Narr, 1983); J. Lyons, *Natural Language and Universal Grammar: Essays in Linguistic Theory* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991); *New Essays on Deixis*, edited by K. Green (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1995).

² See J. Lyons, 'Deixis as the Source of Reference', in *Formal Semantics of Natural Language*, edited by E. L. Keenan (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press,

1975), pp. 147-65; reprinted in Lyons, *Natural Language*.

³ For the term zero-point see K. Green, 'Deixis and the Poetic Persona', *Language and Literature*, 1-ii (1992), 121-34 (p. 122); for the term *origo*, see Bühler, 'The Deictic Field', p. 11.

⁴ See J. Lyons, 'Deixis and Subjectivity: *Loquor ergo sum?*', in *Speech, Place and Action: Studies in Deixis and Related Topics*, edited by R. J. Jarvella & W. Klein (Chichester, John Wiley, 1982), pp. 101-24.

⁵ Keith Green ('Deixis and the Poetic Persona', p. 126) proposes a new classification of the deictic categories which I have chosen to follow: reference; the *origo*; time and space; the text; subjectivity; and syntax. Text deixis comprises all the elements which refer the text back to itself, including impure textual deixis. Subjectivity deixis accounts for the presence of modality in an utterance as modality encodes a subjective experience on the part of the encoder. Syntax deixis includes syntactic forms which have a deictic function: for instance, an interrogative construction of an utterance presupposes an addressee. I do not utilize the final three categories in my discussion of Montale. For a definition of these terms, see Lyons, *Semantics*; Green, 'Deixis and the Poetic Persona'.

⁶ Tense in tensed languages allows the speaker and, together with him/her, the hearer to project themselves into the past or future, backwards and forward in time, as if texts were real worlds with precise spatio-temporal dimensions. The so-called *deictic projection* (Lyons, *Semantics*, p. 690) allows the speaker and the hearer of a text to picture themselves at a time t_1 , different from the coding time t_0 , and to (re)experience the event while it is recounted.

⁷ I am in agreement with Green ('Deixis and the Poetic Persona', p. 126) when he includes second person personal pronouns under the category of the *origo*, since the second person refers to the hearer/addressee who plays an active role in the

context of utterance, and therefore can be seen as closely related to the *origo*.

⁸ When such expressions are present within the context of utterance, the text may involve an emotional participation of the speaking voice and of the reader in the fictitious context. This can be achieved by the use of proximal demonstratives when referring to objects or persons which are not present within the same spatio-temporal co-ordinates as those in which the poetic persona and the reader are placed. By using proximal demonstratives the speaking voice establishes a closer emotional relationship with what is being described. This relationship can be defined as empathy.

⁹ All quotations from Montale's poetry are taken from *Tutte le poesie*, edited by G. Zampa, third edition (Milan, Mondadori, 1987).

¹⁰ The poem 'In limine' has been considered as anticipating the whole of Montale's poetics, almost a miniature version of his poetic journey which starts with *Ossi di seppia* (1925) and ends with *Diario postumo* (1996). For other readings of 'In limine', see M. Brose, 'The Spirit of the Sign: Oppositional Structures in Montale's "Ossi di Seppia"', *Stanford Italian Review*, 4 (1984), 147-75; M. Fabris, 'Lettura polimorfa di "In limine" di Montale', in *Poesia italiana del '900. Una proposta didattica per la lettura del testo poetico*, edited by M. Mancini, M. Marchi, & D. Marinari (Milan, Franco Angeli, 1984), pp. 107-25; E. Giachery, *Metamorfosi dell'orto e altri scritti montaliani* (Rome, Bonacci, 1985), pp. 9-47; R.

Riccobono, 'Deixis and the Dynamics of the Relationship between Text and Reader in the Poetry of Eugenio Montale', *Edinburgh Working Papers in Applied Linguistics*, 7 (1996), 100-9.

¹¹ The poetic voice describes the human condition as imprisoned within a claustrophobic 'orto' or a 'rete che ci stringe', or walled in as in 'Addii, fischi nel buio', 5: 'È l'ora. Forse / gli automi hanno ragione. Come appaiono / dai corridoi, murati!' (ll. 2-4, p. 143). However, in other poems, it is made clear that the nature of the speaking voice is different from that of

other people who do not ask questions about life, but who, like 'automatons', live their life by blindly accepting it: 'Ah l'uomo che se ne va sicuro, / agli altri ed a se stesso amico, / e l'ombra sua non cura che la canicola / stampa sopra uno scalcinato muro!' ('Non chiederci la parola', ll. 5-8, p. 29); 'Forse un mattino andando in un'aria di vetro, / arida, rivolgendomi, vedrò compirsi il miracolo: / il nulla alle mie spalle, il vuoto dietro / di me, con un terrore di ubriaco' ('Forse un mattino andando', ll. 1-4, p. 42); 'Sono colui / che ha veduto un istante e tanto basta / a chi cammina incolonnato come ora / avviene a noi se siamo ancora in vita / o era un inganno crederlo' ('Gli uomini che si voltano', ll. 22-26, p. 386).

¹² In 'In limine' a wall encloses the speaking voice within a claustrophobic garden; similarly, in 'Dora Markus', the sea can be seen as another metaphor for the insurmountable obstacle which divides Dora from her own country, a land which is located beyond the spatial co-ordinates where she and her lover are placed.

¹³ Montale's feeling of disharmony with reality has been recognized by the poet himself as the origin of his poetic production in *Confessioni di scrittori*. He declares: 'L'argomento della mia poesia (e credo di ogni possibile poesia) è la condizione umana in sé considerata. [...] Avendo sentito fin dalla nascita una totale disarmonia con la realtà che mi circondava, la materia della mia ispirazione non poteva essere che quella disarmonia...'. See E. Montale, *Confessioni di Scrittori. Interviste con se stessi* (Turin, Edizioni Radio Italiana, 1951), p. 67 (my italics).

¹⁴ In 'La speranza di pure rivederti', Clizia is described as an absent 'tu' or addressee whom Montale is hoping to see again: 'La speranza di pure rivederti / m'abbandonava; / e mi chiesi se questo che mi chiude / ogni senso di te, schermo d'immagini, / ha i segni della morte o dal passato / è in esso, ma distorto e fatto labile, / un tuo barbaglio...' (ll. 1-7, p. 144). On the other hand, in 'La casa dei doganieri', the addressee is not described as simply absent, but as someone who has lost her memory: the loss of memory creates a situation where the relationship

between voice and addressee cannot lead to any salvific epiphany of the woman as was the hope in 'La speranza di pure rivederti': 'Tu non ricordi la casa dei doganieri / sul rialzo a strapiombo sulla scogliera (ll. 1-2, p. 167); and again: 'Tu non ricordi: altro tempo frastorna / la tua memoria' (ll. 10-11, p. 167).

¹⁵ On the opposition Miracle-Necessity, see A. Marchese, *Visiting Angel. Interpretazione semiologica della poesia di Montale* (Turin, Società Editrice Internazionale, 1977); Brose.

¹⁶ The issue of liminality in Montale's poetry has been discussed by Brose; R. West, *Montale, Poet on the Edge* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1981); and R. Riccobono, 'Lettura in limine di "La canna che dispiuma" e di "Fuscello teso dal muro" di Eugenio Montale', *The Italianist*, 14 (1994), 111-32.

¹⁷ For a further analysis of this point, see E. Montale, *Nel nostro tempo* (Milan, Rizzoli, 1972), pp. 46ff.

¹⁸ The short story 'Sul limite' has already been seen by A. Pipa and, later, by M. Moffa as 'an amusing retelling of Dante's voyage [...] with its three divisions corresponding to Ante-Purgatory (Antelimit), Purgatory (Limite) and Terrestrial Paradise (Zone III)'. See A. Pipa, *Montale and Dante* (Minneapolis, The University of Minnesota Press, 1968), pp. 13-14, n. 19. See also M. Moffa, *Eugenio Montale. Lettura della Farfalla di Dinard* (Naples, SEN, 1986).

¹⁹ Glauco Cambon has written some excellent pages on the use of the term 'entelechy' in Montale's poetry. See G. Cambon, 'The Purgatorial Syndrome', in *Montale's Poetry: A Dream in Reason's Presence* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 90-152 (pp. 110-11).

²⁰ The glove has certainly been turned inside out: the dead are those who are really alive. Montale seems to repeat the same concept in other poetic texts. In 'A mia madre' the figure of the dead mother is described as 'living' in the Elysium: '[...] se tu cedi / come un'ombra la spoglia / (e non è un'ombra, / o gentile, non è ciò che tu credi) / chi ti proteggerà? La strada sgombra / non è una via, solo due mani, un volto /

quelle mani, quel volto, il gesto d'una / vita che non è un'altra ma se stessa, / solo questo ti pone nell'eliso / folto d'anime e voci in cui tu vivi ('A mia madre', *La bufera e altro*, ll. 5-14, p. 211). In contrast, in 'Xenia I', 13, the living are described as shadows and, therefore, capable of loving shadows of people whom they have never met: 'L'amavo senza averlo conosciuto. / Fuori di te nessuno lo ricordava. / Non ho fatto ricerche: ora è inutile. / Dopo di te sono rimasto il solo / per cui egli è esistito. Ma è possibile, / lo sai, amare un'ombra, ombre noi stessi' ('Xenia I', 13, ll. 8-13, p. 301).

²¹ The presence of a screen is a recurrent theme in Montale's poetry: 'Forse un mattino andando' (*Ossi di seppia*); 'Cigola la carrucola del pozzo' (*Ossi di seppia*); 'La speranza di pure rivederti' (*Le occasioni*). For an analysis of the screen in Montale's poetry, see M. Rombi, *Montale: parole, sensi e immagini* (Rome, Bulzoni, 1978).

²² The speaking voice is not identified by a first person pronoun, but as one among the group identified by a first person plural pronoun: 'alcuno di noi' (l. 6, p. 74). However, what is happening in the fictional context of the poem can be considered not just as a perception of the whole group, but also as that of the speaking voice. I like to think of the poem 'Vasca' as almost a textual mirror image of a later poem 'Ribaltamento' (*Quaderno di quattro anni*) where the image of a pond is also present: 'La vasca è un grande cerchio, vi si vedono / ninfee e pesciolini rosa pallido. / Mi sporgo e vi cado dentro ma dà l'allarme / un bimbo della mia età. / Chissà se c'è ancora acqua. Curvo il braccio / e tocco il pavimento della mia stanza'. I am inclined to believe that, as in 'Ribaltamento', the people who throw the stone that breaks the surface of the pond in 'Vasca' are a group of children. The event could possibly be interpreted as one of Montale's memories of first realizing that a reality could exist beyond a screen of illusory images.

²³ I believe that, although no linguist has yet included adjectives within any deictic category, the adjective 'altro' in this context has a deictic value. 'Altro' connotes another entity which is recognized as

something different from what was perceived before on the pond's surface and refers to it by indicating it both to the poetic voice and to the reader. I would identify the use of 'altro' as a deictic of reference.

²⁴ The verb *erompere* is an interesting choice as it includes both the verb of vertical movement 'to break out of', and the verb *rompere* which semantically reminds the reader of the 'maglia rotta' of 'In limine'.

²⁵ The past tense which returns in the final line of 'Vasca' is not a past historic, but a perfect tense. As Lepschy and Lepschy explain: 'The perfect is used to describe a completed action which is still felt to be in some way linked to the present. [...] The past historic is the past tense used for completed action which is no longer related to the present': see A. L. Lepschy & G. Lepschy, *The Italian Language Today*, second edition (London-New York, Routledge, 1992), pp. 228-29. If this is the case, it can be claimed that the poetic persona's mere observation of life in the first stanza is no longer possible after witnessing the actions of the unknown entity described in lines 9 to 13. After the experience of liminality, even if not in the first person, the speaking voice cannot resume the use of the past historic, but must adopt the perfect tense which indicates a relationship between the past events witnessed and his new concept of reality. The poetic persona has experienced a moment of limited vision beyond the two-dimensional screen and, although the screen has closed again, the two-dimensionality of reality is no longer acceptable to him. In the economy of the poem, the vision of the third spatial dimension, volume, finds its temporal counterpart in the addition of the perfect tense to the use of the past historic and the present tense.

²⁶ Rebecca West has referred to the tendency in Montale's poetry to 'dissolution into unnameability': see R. West, 'Montale's *Care Ombre*: Identity and its Dissolution', *Forum Italicum*, 23, i-ii (1989), 212-28 (pp. 214-15).

²⁷ See the note to 'Carnevale di Gerti' in E. Montale, *L'opera in versi*, edited by R. Bettarini & G. Contini (Turin, Einaudi, 1980), pp. 897-99.

²⁸ In 'La casa dei doganieri', the passage into liminality can be seen to occur between the third and the last stanza of the poem. In the first three stanzas, images of turning objects are contrasted with the flat and infinite line of the horizon: 'La bussola va impazzita all'avventura' (l. 8, p. 168); 'un filo s'addipana' (l. 11, p. 168); 'in cima al tetto la banderuola / affumicata gira senza pietà' (ll. 13-14, p. 168) in contrast to 'Oh l'orizzonte in fuga, dove s'accende / rara la luce della petroliera! / Il varco è qui?' (ll. 17-19, p. 168). For images in opposition in 'Fuscello teso dal muro', see Riccobono, 'Lettura in limine', pp. 121-31.

²⁹ Cambon (p. 41) argues that 'the confusion of time in the speaker's mind (between Carnival and New Year) is germane to the fusion of the lead that, at the very moment when everything is consummated and begins anew, reopens every possibility, the "deranging [*disguido*] of the possible": a magical suspension, or parenthesis, of time, a momentary victory over mechanical and entropic time, a resurfacing of the significant past into continuity and co-presence'.

³⁰ Cambon has also examined a similar system of verbs which contain the prefix 'ri-' lexically or semantically (pp. 34-53). The critic claims that the use of these verbs refers to three different directional motions of time: an 'ascensive' one into a subjective temporalness; a cyclical one into a temporalness which is 'mechanical and astronomic' and is 'extrinsically measurable'; finally, a descendant one 'as relapse into *normal* measurable time' (Cambon, p. 52, the word *normal* is mine). To Cambon's interesting discussion, I should like to add that different directional motions of time and space seem

to be organized in a systematic way in quite a few of Montale's texts, and that this spatio-temporal dynamic system is closely connected to the theme of liminality.

³¹ Once again the idea of a circular movement is given, together with the idea of a dislocation downwards, which seems to reinforce the spatial adverb 'quaggiù' (l. 55, p. 125).

³² The theme of the fusion of matter and the recrystallization into form is one of the main themes of Montale's poetry which is present since the very first poem of *Ossi di seppia*. Examples can be found in the following poems: 'In limine': 'vedi che si trasforma questo lembo / di terra solitario in un crogiuolo' (ll. 8-9, p. 7); 'Sul muro grafito': 'Chi si ricorda più del fuoco ch'arse / impetuoso / nelle vene del mondo; — in un riposo / freddo le forme, opache, sono sparse' (ll. 5-8, p. 50); 'Lasciando un "Dove"': 'ho amato il sole, / il colore del miele, or chiedo il bruno, / chiedo il fuoco che cova, questa tomba / che non vola' (ll. 3-6, p. 233); 'Il fuoco e il buio': 'E infine non occorre fuoco affatto, / anzi un buon sottozero tiene a freno / la tediosa bisava, l'ispirazione' (ll. 7-9, p. 560).

³³ Cambon (pp. 34-53) refers to Gerti's sorcerous powers: 'A white sorceress, is what I had called Gerti at the outset, and as the good witch she is, she has indeed performed her sortilege, pouring into cold water the molten lead that [...] should foretell the future through the bizarre shapes into which it hardens [...]. But she is a defeated sorceress. If the end of stanza 1 commemorates the free moment, the instant opening of possibility [...], the poem's conclusion will feature "frozen lead," reality opaque and impervious once more under the vise of stiff limitation' (p. 39).

APPENDIX V

Published paper: 'Further Reflections on the Theme of Death in the poetry of Eugenio Montale: "A mia madre", "Voce giunta con le folaghe" and "I morti" ', in *Montale Words in Time*, ed. by G. Talbot and D. Thompson (Leics: Troubador, 1998).

FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON THE THEME OF DEATH IN THE POETRY OF EUGENIO MONTALE

'A mia madre', 'Voce giunta con le folaghe' and 'I morti'



Rossella Riccobono

Eugenio Montale's poetry has been described as the outcome of a continuous philosophical research into reality, resulting in answers which are never definite. This approach brings the poet to a knowledge of the world by means of a *via negativa*.¹ Some examples of this negative way to knowledge are offered by the following lines: 'Non domandarci la formula che mondi possa aprirti' ('Non chiederci la parola', 'Ossi brevi', 1, v.9, OV, 27 / TP, 29) and, later in the same poem, 'Codesto solo oggi possiamo dirti, / ciò che *non* siamo, ciò che *non* vogliamo' (vv.11-12,); 'Nessuna cosarossima trovava le sue parole, / ed era mia, era *nostra*, la vostra dolce ignoranza' 'Tentava la vostra mano la tastiera', 'Ossi brevi' 16, vv.11-12, OV, 42 / TP, 44). His poetry is often linguistically marked by the use of adverbs such as 'forse'; by the negation of knowledge verbs, 'non so'; by the presence of opinion verbs, 'credo' and hypothetical structures, i.e., 'if' clauses.²

The lack of definite answers and, therefore, the lack of certainty, brings the poet to deal thematically with all those aspects of human reality which are not yet complete and which lack identity: 'Ma ecco, c'è altro che striscia / a fior della spera rifatta liscia: / di erompere non ha virtù / vuol vivere e non sa come' ('Vasca', vv.9-12, OV, 1 / TP, 74) which concludes with the powerful sentence 'è nato e morto, e non ha avuto un nome' ('Vasca', v.14). The struggle of entities to rise and shape themselves into identities is defeated *a priori*. Nothing is autonomous and defined in the Montalian universe. Man lives in the total lack of knowledge and certainty. This outlook takes its origins from Montale's feeling of disharmony with reality of which he said he had always been aware ever since his childhood. In 'Confessioni di scrittori' the poet declared:

L'argomento della mia poesia (e credo di ogni possibile poesia) è la condizione umana in sé considerata. [...] Avendo sentito fin dalla nascita una totale disarmonia con la realtà che mi circondava, la materia della mia ispirazione non poteva essere che *quella* disarmonia [...].³

This disharmony with reality is clearly seen in his attitude towards the dissolution of identity; not just the poet's identity, the origin of the problem, but the identity of everything that surrounds him. Reality is, thus, described as the 'limbo squallido / delle monche esistenze' ('Crisalide', vv.37-38, OV, 86 / TP, 88). Man himself is but a shadow: 'Ma è possibile, / lo sai, amare un'ombra, ombre noi stessi' (*Satura*, Xenia I, 3, vv.12-13, OV, 293 / TP, 300). The spatio-temporal dimensions of reality are given a priori as deceptive, as a reality of shadows. Montale's poetry is characterised by a continuous dissolution: it starts from the object as it is and, thereafter, proceeds to dissolve it into nothingness.⁴

At the very beginning of his first book, *Ossi di seppia*, Montale speaks to his readers about the possibility of proceeding beyond the limits of the spatio-temporal setting where man is obliged to dwell. Montale believes in the continuity of 'reality' and 'unreality', between immanence and transcendence, between life and death.⁵ Leaping out of what he calls 'la rete che ci stringe' means not only renouncing the certainty of the reality which is familiar to us, but also offering a vow of faith to the transcendent or to the afterworld.⁶ Thus, if in his first book the fight to find an identity tragically takes him always to its negation, in *Le occasioni* and *La bufera e altro* the identity is found in the figure of the messenger, or the *Cristofora* who is either absent (mainly in *Occasioni*), or comes to visit the poet bringing with her signs of the afterlife or underworld.⁷

From *Ossi di seppia*, via *Le occasioni*, until *La bufera*, Montale's attachment to 'oltremondo' becomes even clearer.⁸ What belongs to unreality (the shades, or the dead, etc.) acquires a more positive essence than that which characterises our reality. Montini has written:

La differenza costitutiva fra Montale e i suoi contemporanei sta in ciò che questi sono in pace con la realtà [...] mentre Montale non ha certezza del reale. [...] Ma si può anticipare che, come delle *Occasioni* così della *Bufera* sono già negli *Ossi* veri e propri elementi avanti la lettera. In breve: in un mondo talmente cancellato, improbabile e senza avvenire, i vivi non sono più autonomi di ombre; al confronto i morti, depositari del ritornante passato, acquistano la pienezza di vita di cui quel mondo è capace.⁹

The continuity between immanence and transcendence is strengthened along the *excursus* of Montale's poetry and becomes the central idea of his late books (from *Satura* onwards). However, the idea that a kind of salvation from the lack of essence was to be found beyond the wall, by the powers of a ghost, was already present in 'In mine': 'Se procedi t'imbatti / tu forse nel fantasma che ti salva' (vv.11-12, OV, 5 / TP, 6). The dissolution of reality and the speculation of what is beyond reality are constantly present throughout Montale's poetry. If immanence and transcendence, life and death are contiguous, then one only needs to find the way to step out of reality into the other dimension, to break the veil which separates reality and unreality.

Montale had been looking from the start, and on all possible occasions, for the 'maglia rotta' ('In limine', v.15):

Vedi, in questi silenzi in cui le cose
s'abbandonano e sembrano vicine
a tradire il loro ultimo segreto,
talora ci si aspetta
di scoprire uno sbaglio di Natura,
il punto morto del mondo, l'anello che non tiene,
il filo da disbrogliare che finalmente ci metta
nel mezzo di una verità.

('I limoni', vv.22-29, OV, 9 / TP, 11)

There is, thus, a constant effort to know what lies beyond the wall and how to become part of unreality. Montale's poetic research into unreality, however, does not lead to an optimistic answer for the search of plenitude which reality lacks, rather to the realisation that reality and unreality are the 'recto' and the 'verso' of the same page.¹⁰ However, if compared with reality, unreality gains a positive light: 'solo l'inidentità / regge il mondo' ('I miraggi', *Quaderno di quattro anni*, vv.27-28, OV, 623 / TP, 641), 'Non c'è stato / nulla, assolutamente nulla dietro di noi / e nulla abbiamo disperatamente amato più di quel nulla' ('In negativo', *Quaderno di quattro anni*, vv.9-11, OV, 574 / TP, 589).

One of the themes which Montale constantly returns to in his search for dissolution is that of death, present in his poetry since *Ossi di seppia* with a series of poems such as 'Poesie per Camillo Sbarbaro' ('Epigramma' and 'Caffé a Rapallo'), 'Sarcofaghi', as well as 'I morti'. With the exception of 'La casa dei doganieri' (*Le occasioni*), the theme of death can be seen to be readdressed in *La bufera e altro*, in poems dedicated to Montale's 'care ombre', 'A mia madre', 'Voce giunta con le folaghe', 'L'arca', 'Proda di Versilia', 'Visita a Fadin' and a few others. As mentioned before, the themes of death and transcendence are fully explored from *Satura* onwards, but the purpose of this paper is to analyse its early phase in connection with the passage from reality into unreality, from life into death. I shall focus my attention on three poems in particular: 'I morti', 'A mia madre' and 'Voce giunta con le folaghe'.

Death is one of the means which permit the passage from one side of the wall to the other. However my interest will not focus on the two sides represented by life and death, but on the passage itself, or the geographical-mental-symbolic area through which the participants in the fictitious context of utterance must go in order to pass to the other side. This is the area which I have already explored and referred to as 'liminality' in connection with the *rite de passage* of the neophyte in the ceremony of initiation.¹¹ Such terms will not be mentioned again in this paper except at its conclusion. However the term 'liminality', by which is meant the 'phase-in-between life and death', will be used throughout.

The first poem in *Ossi di seppia* which explicitly deals with the theme of death is 'I morti' (1926) in which Montale fictionally uses the dead as the choral speaking voice which introduces the reader to the context of situation. Montale's belief in the continuity between immanence and transcendence is clarified to his reader in his earlier poems. In 'In limine' he had stated that the two dimensions conventionally

ferred to by the adverbs *here* and *there* were separated by an 'erto muro' ('In limine', vv.10, OV, 5 / TP, 7), but that there was a hope in finding the 'maglia rotta' which permitted the passage to the other side:

Cerca una maglia rotta nella rete
che ci stringe, tu balza fuori, fuggi! (vv.15-16).¹²

In the same poem it was suggested that one might possibly encounter a ghost endowed with the necessary powers of salvation to take the 'tu' or the 'hearer-addressee' to the other side of the 'erto muro':

Se procedi t'imbatti
tu forse nel fantasma che ti salva.
(vv.11-12)

In 'I morti', for the first time, the dead, the ghosts themselves, are the choral speaking voice of the poetic context. Nevertheless the expectation of being able to find a guide among those who have already experienced the afterworld, those who have already found the 'maglia rotta' and thus should have the power to lead the living to some kind of salvation, is not fulfilled. Not only are these ghosts unable to suggest any way of progressing to the other side of the 'erto muro', but they are also without any powers of salvation whatsoever. The dead describe their existential condition beyond life as very similar to that of the living:

[...] — e il gorgo sterile verdeggia
come ai dì che ci videro tra i vivi.
(vv.6-7, OV, 93 / TP, 95).

Their existential space is still the same one that the dead knew when they were alive: topographically it reminds the reader of the Ligurian landscape and, in this sense, is recognisable as the same geographical setting of 'Voce giunta con le folaghe'. The condition of the dead is described by them as being static, where mobility is impeded:

[...] tra i fili che congiungono
un ramo all'altro si dibatte il cuore
come la gallinella
di mare che s'insacca tra le maglie;
e immobili e vaganti ci ritiene
una fissità gelida.
(vv.23-28)

The dead, then, are not bearers of means of salvation which could reveal how to find the broken mesh, rather they are prisoners, just like the living, within the spatio-temporal net of existence. Both the dead and the living are therefore subject to a condition of *larvae*; they live in a freezing limbo. The dead are, in fact, even worse off than the living as they are 'larve rimorse dai ricordi umani'. It could be concluded, at this

point, that death is not sufficient to find the broken mesh as the dead are still prisoners of the same spatio-temporal cage; the space where they linger is the same as before their death, and their human memory, 'una forza [...] / spietata più del vivere', (vv.31-32) still pushes them towards their past:

Così

forse anche ai morti è tolto ogni riposo
 nelle zolle: una forza indi li tragge
 spietata più del vivere, ed attorno,
 larve rimorse dai ricordi umani,
 li volge fino a queste spiagge, fiati
 senza materia o voce
 traditi dalla tenebra.

(vv.29-36)

Memory ties even the dead to their past and it seems that there is no escape from its net. Closely connected to the theme of death, the theme of memory becomes central to *Le Occasioni* in which it reaches a high point in 'La casa dei doganieri' (1930) where the addressee's lack of memory creates the tragic situation of the poetic voice's despair as he loses the sense of direction of his past and future which memory seemed to guarantee. The tragedy is underlined by the recurrent and hammering sound of 'tu non ricordi'. Despite the tragic effects on the speaking voice due to lack of memory of the addressee, this situation seems to create at least one positive moment, the brief vision that the 'maglia rotta' may have been found:

Oh l'orizzonte in fuga, dove s'accende
 rara la luce della petroliera!

Il varco è qui?

(vv.17-19, OV, 161 / TP, 167)

Memory is therefore essential for the speaking voice in order to maintain a sense of direction, despite the fact that Montale had declared his lack of direction previously in 'Potessi almeno costringere' ('Mediterraneo', 8): 'sensi non ho, né senso. Non ho limite' (v.24, OV, 58 / TP, 60).

However, memory chains both living and dead to the spatio-temporal cage and does not allow passage to the other side. The balance between memory and lack of memory is therefore extremely subtle: the passage into a less claustrophobic dimension of existence must be paid for by sacrificing one's sense of identity and surrendering to dissolution out of space and time and into the unknown.¹³

This is the central knot of Montale's philosophical position in connection with death and dissolution. Is Montale unwilling or unable to take the right steps to the other side of the wall? Or is it that he has not met the ghost which can bring about his salvation, or at least the salvation of the various addressees of his poetic texts? To try and answer these questions we need to leap forward 17 years and analyse a later text: 'Voce giunta con le folaghe' (1947) from *La bufera e altro*.

In 'Voce giunta con le folaghe' the speaking voice, accompanied by the 'ombra fidata', undertakes a journey through the 'underworld' to meet the shade of his

father. As Rebecca West has made clear, despite its close resemblance to Dante's or Aeneas's journeys to the underworld, Montale's journey does not embody 'the consolation of [Dante's] firm faith or [Virgil's] desolation of *inanità*', but 'both recognizes the inevitable dissolution of *mortalia* and embodies [...] a form of continuing life that prolongs "beyond the threshold of death" conversation, communion and love'.¹⁴ In 'Voce giunta con le folaghe' the meeting between the son and the soul of his father is, therefore, a unique occasion for both of them to communicate and enrich themselves through the warning of the 'ombra fidata'. As I see it, this poem is doubly pivotal for our understanding of Montale's journey into death and dissolution since it proposes again the same context of situation as 'I morti'. However, it goes further in that it represents a link-text between the view of the existential condition of the dead as 'larve rimorse dai ricordi umani' and the later poems, from *La bufera* deep into *Satura*, where the dead are seen as the bearers of the truthful plenitude of existence, and the living, by comparison, are but shadows.

In 'A mia madre' (1943), Montale had already anticipated that the condition of the dead mother was one of real life in comparison with that of the 'viventi' ('or che la lotta / dei viventi più infuria', vv.4-5, OV, 203 / TP, 211). 'A mia madre' presents some details which anticipate another text written in 1946, 'Sul limite' from *Farfalla di Dinard* in which the figure of the mother will be portrayed as part of the 'entelechie superiori' of Zone III of Limite.¹⁵

By analysing the short story 'Sul limite' it is possible to put the zone of liminality into clearer focus; the area through which one must pass in order to proceed from one side of the wall to the other is described as a kind of Purgatory where those who die are admitted for a certain length of time so as to undergo a process of purification.¹⁶ Following a fictional accident, the narrator of this short story reaches 'Limite' after a hallucinated journey, by tram first and later by carriage, in the company of his long dead friends whom he meets again there, Nicola, Pinocchetto and Galiffa. Here the relationship between life and death is clarified:

— [...] Giovanna! Possibile che fosse... lei?

— Giovanna — confermò Nicola avviando il somarello fra alcune ricche piantagioni che parevano di ricino. — È anche lei a Limite, e trova modo di occuparsi persino dello Zoo.

— Morta? — arrischiavi a occhi bassi traballando sul sedile angusto. [...]

— E ... sta bene?

— Viva — ammonì seccamente; — o meglio, anche per lei il guanto si è rovesciato; come per me, come per te. Di' pur morta se credi.

(*Farfalla di Dinard*, 'Sul limite', pp.225-26).

And then, again, a few lines later:

— T'ha fatto un certo effetto, eh? — ghignò Nicola con un'allegria che pareva sforzata.

— Lo so, la prima volta si è ancora attaccati alle storie di prima. È come accadeva a me quand'ero tra i vivi, che dico?, tra i morti dell'Antelimite da cui tu giungi ora.

(*Farfalla di Dinard*, 'Sul limite', p.226)

The values of life and death are inverted as death is the real life. Life was but a brief interval, a brief death between lives:

— Vieni, fatti coraggio [...]. Era troppo comodo dimenticare. Riprendi a vivere come noi... giunti prima di te. (*Farfalla di Dinard*, 'Sul limite', p.229)

Not only is arriving at Limite a return to the real life, but it is an occasion to shed the terrestrial memory and acquire a new one. In a way, this seems to be a possible answer to the question left at the end of the poem 'I morti', in which the protagonists could not free themselves of the weight of life because memory ('una forza [...] / spi-etata più del vivere', vv.31-32, OV, 93 / TP, 96) was keeping them in a limbo-like condition. In the short story 'Sul limite', 'Limite', the zone of access to Zones I, II and III is easily associated with the zone which I referred to as 'liminality', i.e., the area of passage between life and death, or as is made clear in 'Sul limite', between death and life. Liminality is therefore a zone of perfecting and purging from the earthly memory. However, even Zones I and II seem to be further zones through which one must pass before being admitted to the final Zone III where de-materialisation is completed and where the narrator's mother is placed:

— [...] Non posso ricominciare, Nicola, non posso, portami da mia madre... se c'è.
— Potrai comunicare con Zona III più tardi. Le sue ultime notizie erano buone. Ma là la memoria è molto ridotta, devo informartene. (*Farfalla di Dinard*, 'Sul limite', p.229)

It is clear at this point that the passage between life and death is not a simple leap through a 'maglia rotta' but involves a real *rite de passage* where the neophyte, or the newly dead, must be initiated to a new concept of life and a new memory. Liminality is an area which is divided into different sub-areas and each of them progressively leads to full de-materialisation and loss of memory:

[...] Giovanna ti farà vedere la 'registrazione' di quella che hai chiamato la tua vita, stenterai a riconoscerla. Pare sia così fino a Zona I, la stazione dove si recano spesso Jack e Fred, il pittore che ti fece quel ritratto a Spoleto, te ne ricorderai. Poi dicono che questa memoria si perde e se ne acquista un'altra. [...] Certo a Zona II ci sarà molto da fare per lei, all'istituto delle entelechie superiori dove comincia il processo di smaterializzazione. Ma le notizie che ci giungono di là non sono troppo incoraggianti [...]. Tuo padre aveva promesso di farsi vivo di là, ma per ora... E così abbiamo preferito di prolungare la nostra anticamera a Limite. (*Farfalla di Dinard*, 'Sul limite', pp.226-27)

This explains quite clearly the dynamics of liminality, of which 'Limite' becomes a metaphor, and the process of passage into the new dimension.

Keeping these reflections in mind I should now like to return to the analysis of 'Voce giunta con le folaghe' where the figure of the dead father is present in a naturalistic setting, which is very reminiscent of the geographical setting of Liguria and reminds the reader of the setting of 'I morti'. 'Voce giunta con le folaghe' is structured

around the mute dialogue between father and son and later around the dialogue between the 'ombra fidata' and the father. It is easy to recognise the father figure if it is related to another father figure in a previous poem-in-prose, 'Dov'era il tennis...' (1943) where one passage in particular reminds us of the father in this poem:

Pochi sentirono dapprima che il freddo stava per giungere; e tra questi forse mio padre che anche nel più caldo giorno d'agosto, finita la cena all'aperto, piena di falene e d'altri insetti, dopo essersi buttato sulle spalle uno scialle di lana, ripetendo sempre in francese, chissà perché, 'il fait bien froid, bien froid', si ritirava subito in camera per finir di fumarsi a letto il suo Cavour da sette centesimi. ('Dov'era il tennis...', OV, 216 / TP, 223-24)¹⁷

The dialogue between son and father is soon replaced by the son's monologue. Looking at the deictic signs of speech, we observe that at first the father was addressed in the second person pronoun whilst the 'ombra fidata' was referred to in the third person: 'eccoti fuor dal buio / che ti teneva, padre, erto ai barbagli' (vv.6-7, OV, 250 / TP, 258) and 'L'ombra che mi accompagna / alla tua tomba, vigile, / e posa sopra un'erma ed ha uno scarto / altero della fronte' (vv.12-15). Thus, as the dialogue becomes a monologue in the third stanza of the poem, a separation between the father and the son becomes clear as the two shades are referred to by third person pronouns:

L'ombra fidata e il muto che risorge,
quella che scorporò l'interno fuoco
e colui che lunghi anni d'oltretempo
(anni per me pesante) disincarnano,
si scambiano parole che interito
sul margine io non odo.
(vv.23-28)

In this way the son is excluded from the later dialogue between the two shades. A strong separation is maintained between the two shadows and the speaking voice: 'quella che scorporò l'intero fuoco / e colui che lunghi anni d'oltretempo / [...] disincarnano', (vv.24-26) and 'anni per me pesante' (v.26). The use of the brackets separates the speaking voice even more from the description of the shades. Being embedded within the main sentence results in '(anni per me pesante)' being joined to it structurally but separated from it formally; united and separated at the same time. This takes us back to the poem 'I morti': 'ed i mozzì / loro voli ci sfiorano pur ora / da noi divisi appena' (vv 36-38, OV, 94 / TP, 96, my italics).

The 'ombra fidata' is acting as an adviser to the father's soul and, moreover, is assuming the role of a Christ-figure: 'Ho pensato per te, ho ricordato / per tutti' (vv.34-35, OV, 251 / TP, 259). It is necessary for the father's soul to go back 'al cielo libero / che ti tramuta' (vv.35-36) and this is the reason why the 'ombra fidata' has accompanied Montale to the father's grave.

At this point it is possible to say that there is a visible difference between the two shades: one of them ('l'ombra fidata' [v.23] and 'l'ombra viva' [v.47]) can be recog-

nised as the 'fantasma che [ti] salva', the ghost endowed with the powers of salvation to which Montale had alluded right from the very first poem in *Ossi di seppia*, 'In limine'. The other shade is a ghost which needs to be saved through the loss of his earthly memory. The former is 'quella che scorporò l'interno fuoco' (v.24), i.e. the one who has undergone the process of de-materialisation; the latter is one whom 'lunghe anni d'oltretempo / [...] disincarnano' (vv.25-26).¹⁸ In other words although they are both shades, as was explained in the short story 'Sul limite', they belong to different phases of the process of liminality. The soul of the father is presented to us as a 'larva rimorsa dai ricordi umani' and his fear of forgetting and being forgotten becomes evident in the following lines: 'ma l'altro sbigottisce e teme che / la larva di memoria in cui si scalda / ai suoi figli si spenga al nuovo balzo' (vv.31-33, OV, 250 / TP, 259). Why does the speaking voice mention a 'nuovo balzo'? According to the short story 'Sul limite' there are various 'balzi' which must be completed in order to reach de-materialisation. The soul of the father is in the early phase of liminality, possibly a phase where attachment to the worldly life is still strong. Therefore it is necessary for him to pass through the next stage which will weaken his terrestrial memory and take him closer to his Nirvana.

Memory, once again, proves to be the keyword of another of Montale's poetic texts and it is through memory that it becomes possible to stay or to go. Even the 'ombra fidata', the Christ-figure, is tempted to stay, even if only for a moment. She herself replies to her question addressed to the father with the affirmative adverb which indicates desire: 'Ancora questa rupe / ti tenta? Sì, la battima è la stessa / di sempre' (vv.36-38, my italics). It is interesting at this point to analyse closely the poetic *persona* of the Christ-figure. Even the Christ-figure voice is tempted by memory and affectionately refers to the land of the living as 'i miei / lidi' (vv.38-39).¹⁹ But she soon detaches herself again from the world, yet in tones of deep love for it: 'Io le rammento quelle / mie prode' (vv.40-41, my italics). In this fashion it reveals its human and divine nature which are present at the same time, strengthening even more its Christ-like poetic function. The use of a distal spatial deictic underlines the detachment and the *enjambement* foregrounds both 'quelle', as line end, and 'mie' as the start of the new line. In this fashion the two deictics indicating detachment from the world and love, and possession of it, are formally given identical weight in the semantic value of the sentence. Soon the speaking voice regains the status of adviser not only for the father's soul, but, it seems, also for herself.

It is necessary for the soul of the father to go back to the 'cielo libero' in order to be transmuted. In the poem 'I morti', the dead were literally trapped in a limbo-like existential dimension where their condition was that of 'larve rimorse dai ricordi umani', who had not met 'il fantasma che [...] salva'. In 'Voce giunta con le folaghe' there are two options for the father: either to stay on the 'rupe' and be a 'larva rimorsa dai ricordi umani' or to go back to the sky and assume a new memory and 'scorporare l'interno fuoco'. Since it is likely that the only path to immortality is through the memory persisting in one's children, the father comes back to the 'rupe' to meet his son. Montale's final gesture to his father is that of offering him his hands, but this is rejected. The father's soul is still undecided about whether to stay or to go, but the communion between son and father is interrupted as staying is no longer a means of enrichment for the father, but becomes 'peccato', 'letargo di talpe' and 'abiezione': 'Il vento del giorno / confonde l'ombra viva e l'altra ancora / riluttante in un mezzo che

respinge / le mie mani' (vv.45-48).

In 'Voce giunta con le folaghe' we have the full picture of what happens within the zone of liminality and for this reason it should be stressed once more that this poem functions as a link-text between 'I morti', where the passage to the other side is depicted as maintenance of the *status quo* of life and where the dead are, in fact, in a worse position than the living, and 'A mia madre', where the mother is pictured in the 'eliso / folto d'anime e voci', or, as is explained in 'Sul limite', in the final phase of de-materialisation. The mother, as well as the 'ombra fidata', is part of the 'entelechie superiori' and can be considered, using a Dantist's philosophical term, 'figure implete', indicating souls which have attained the full plenitude of their potentialities, and are more alive and complete than ever before; in other words ghosts who have '[scorporato] l'interno fuoco'.²⁰

In a previous study I claimed that the function of Montale, as a poet, and of the speaking voices present within his poetic text could be compared to that of the Shaman in the process of initiation of the neophyte.²¹ His function was that of guiding the neophyte to the other side of the wall through the *rite de passage* which I identified as the passage through the linguistic phenomenon of poetry. I would now like to expand on this and specify that as a poet Montale does indeed act as a Virgil-like guide introducing his reader into his universe and into understanding the necessity of poetry as a means of arriving at a truthful reading of reality. In this way Montale's poetry assumes a conscious metalingual function. However, at the fictional level of his poetic texts, the speaking voice or the poetic voice, which we can interpret as a projection of Montale, remains very much the neophyte. Despite his efforts to look for 'la maglia rotta' and leap over to the other side, the speaking voice can only partake of the truthful meaning of existence by means of poetry, of brief moments of vision. This is clear in 'Forse un mattino andando', 'Ossi' 14:

Forse un mattino andando in un'aria di vetro,
arida, rivolgendomi, vedrò compirsi il miracolo:
il nulla alle mie spalle, il vuoto dietro
di me, con un terrore di ubriaco.

Poi come s'uno schermo, s'accamperanno di gitto
alberi case e colli per l'inganno consueto
(vv.1-6, OV, 40 / TP, 42)

or in 'Gli uomini che si voltano'

Sono colui
che ha veduto un istante e tanto basta
a chi cammina incolonnato come ora
avviene a noi se siamo ancora in vita
o era un inganno crederlo.

(vv.22-26, OV, 376 / TP, 386)

The screen of memory is soon lost behind the poetic voice. Despite his belief in the

unction of poetry, and his obvious success as a poet, Montale sees himself as the neophyte who is not able to proceed beyond the screen of memory, but needs somebody else's help, whoever that somebody else may be: Clizia, the Cristofora, the dead mother, his young self, or his intuitive self (as opposed to Montale-poet as the depositario' or 'sacerdote' of the written word). Or it may be other figures in his later poetry, such as the 'miniangelo / spazzacamino' in 'L'angelo nero' (v.37-8, OV, 369 / TP, 379) or the 'riccio' in 'A pianterreno' (v.10, OV, 357 / TP, 365). In any case Montale can partake of the *rite de passage* of the poetic word, but is not able and does not want to renounce his memory; from the beginning to the end he belongs to and remains one 'della razza / di chi rimane a terra' ('Falsetto', vv.50-51, OV, 13 / TP, 15).

These considerations bring us to a second conclusion which I would like to stress particularly, namely the study of the area of liminality which, in my opinion, is central to an understanding of the progression of Montale's poetry and to the structure of the Montalian text. Most of Montale's poetry seems to be in *limine*. The settings are in *limine*, i.e., on the borders between different dimensions, as for example, the settings between spatial dimensions in 'La casa dei doganieri' ('Tu non ricordi la casa dei doganieri / sul rialzo a strapiombo sulla scogliera', [vv.1-2, OV, 161 / TP, 167]), or 'L'agave sullo scoglio'; 'Il fiore che ripete sull'orlo del burrato' or 'Il balcone'. Temporal dimensions are evident in 'Carnevale di Gerti' ('È Carnevale / o il Dicembre s'indugia ancora?', vv.32-33, OV, 120 / TP, 125), in 'Cigola la carrucola del pozzo' and in 'Merigiare pallido e assorto'. This positioning, *in limine* between the two dimensions, creates dynamics which make the 'varco' become a far more interesting poetic image than just a mere access to the other side of the 'erto muro'. It is for these reasons that I would urge further research into this fascinating area of Montale's poetry.

Finally, some attention should be given to Montale's concept of religion in connection with his theme of death and dissolution. In the short story 'L'angoscia' the poet declares that:

Teoricamente sono contrario alla sopravvivenza e credo che sarebbe sommamente dignitoso se l'uomo o la bestia accettassero di *sombrer* nell'eterno Nulla. Ma in pratica — per eredità — sono cristiano e non so sottrarmi alla idea che qualcosa di noi può o addirittura deve durare. (*Farfalla di Dinard*, p. 249).

From the earlier discussion on death and dissolution I think that, despite the fact that Montale declares himself a Christian, his idea of fading into the 'eterno Nulla' and the process of de-materialisation described in 'Sul limite' are more reminiscent of Buddhism. This impression is also strengthened by the idea of a possible return of the past, for instance in 'Carnevale di Gerti' ('E il Natale verrà e il giorno dell'Anno / che sfolla le caserme e ti riporta / gli amici spersi, e questo Carnevale / pur esso tornerà che ora ci sfugge', vv.38-41, OV, 121 / TP, 125) or in 'Iride' ('Ma se ritorni non sei tu, è mutata / la tua storia terrena', vv.40-41, OV, 240 / TP, 247). As these examples show, the progress of linear time is more than once rejected in favour of a cyclical time, a time in which it is possible to start again, and this too is a topic which might well repay more detailed study.

It has been seen that the area to which I generally referred as 'death and dissolution', hides several themes which deserve to be thoroughly considered, as they

constitute some of the main lines along which Montale's poetry develops from its very *debut*. The concept of 'death-in-life' within 'la rete che ci stringe' ('In limine', vv.15-16, OV, 5 / TP, 7) from which Montale's poetic premises seemed to take their origin and which is part of the theme of 'I morti', finds a counterpoint and a further development in 'A mia madre' and in 'Voce giunta con le folaghe'. Both the fictitious figures of the dead mother and that of the 'ombra fidata - ombra viva' represent the condition of 'life-in-death', i.e., the acquisition of real life after the disembodiment of their three-dimensional earthly existence.²² However, the themes of Montale's religiosity and attachment to the afterworld do reach only a provisional conclusion with 'A mia madre' and 'Voce giunta con le folaghe', which complete Montale's encounter with his 'care ombre' in his third book.

NOTES

1. On Montale's *via negativa*, see S. Solmi, 'Montale 1925', in his *Scrittori negli anni* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1963), pp.19-24. (This article was first published as a review of *Ossi di seppia*, in *Il quindicinale*, 1 [1926], no.3, 19-24); G. Contini, *Una lunga fedeltà. Scritti su Eugenio Montale* (Turin, Einaudi, 1974), pp 3-16; R. West, 'Montale's *care ombre*: Identity and its Dissolution', in *Forum Italicum*, 23 (1989), nos 1-2, 212-28 (215); R. Luperini, *Storia di Montale*, (second edition: Bari, Laterza, 1992), pp.15-58.
2. Rebecca West has studied this linguistic phenomenon of Montale's 'poetics of doubt', see R.J. West, *Eugenio Montale: Poet on the Edge* (Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 1981), pp.56-84. Glauco Cambon, in his *Eugenio Montale's Poetry: A Dream in Reason's Presence* (Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1982), p.172, refers to this linguistic technique of Montale's and to West's work. Among examples of Montale's 'poetics of doubt' are the following: 'un rovello è di qua dall'erto muro. / Se procedi t'imbatti / tu forse nel fantasma che ti salva' ('In limine', vv.10-12, OV, 5 / TP, 7); 'Ahimè, non mai due volte configura / il tempo in egual modo i grani! E scampo / n'è: ché, se accada, insieme alla natura / la nostra fiaba brucerà in un lampo' ('Vento e bandiere', vv.13-16, OV, 23 / TP, 25); 'Forse un mattino andando in un'aria di vetro, / arida, rivolgendomi, vedrò compirsi il miracolo' ('Ossi brevi', 14, vv.1-2, OV, 40 / TP, 42); 'Noi non sappiamo quale sortiremo' ('Mediterraneo', 6, v.1, OV, 56 / TP, 58); 'Tu gli appartieni / e non lo sai. Sei lui, ti credi te' ('Serenata indiana', vv.13-14, OV, 193 / TP, 201).
3. E. Montale, 'Confessioni di scrittori. (Interviste con se stessi)', in *Sulla poesia* (Turin, Edizioni Radio Italiana, 1951), [my italics].
4. Thematically and semantically Montale's poetry has been defined as 'la poesia dell'assenza' (R. Luperini, *Storia di Montale*, cit., p.69). At the very end of the Montalian *excursus*, (the poetic period also known as 'il secondo Montale'), the 'poetry of absence' becomes the 'absence of poetry' as the style of the poems, from *Satura* onwards, is of a more prosaic nature.
5. Montale had been deeply influenced by the French philosopher Emile Boutroux, from whom he derived this belief in the impossibility of separating immanence and transcendence. See A. Pipa, 'L'influence de Boutroux sur Montale', *Revue des études italiennes*, 22 (1976), 3, pp. 193-204 (201-02).
6. As West has shown ('Montale's *care ombre*', cit., pp. 214-15), one of Montale's characteristics is that of his 'attitude toward naming and its opposite - dissolution into unnameability'. This suggests that his poetry is the product of two oppositional forces: a tendency to dissolve into reality and a constant struggle to find an identity.
7. For further reference to the epiphanies of the female messenger in *Le occasioni*, see Cambon, *Eugenio Montale's Poetry*, cit., pp.54-89.
8. There seems to be an overturning of values between reality and what is 'oltre', what lies beyond touch, sight, i.e., 'unreality' (see West, 'Montale's *care ombre*', cit., 215). Everything which belongs to

human reality lacks the essence which is attributed to what lies beyond the wall. Yet in *Ossi di seppia* all the negative connotations of reality find a sort of positivity in knowing that, although man is just one of the 'monche esistenze', at least he exists and is aware of his nothingness. Cary wrote about the negativity of *Ossi di seppia*: 'I believe that critics have made too much of Montale as a wastelander, a poet of desolation and despair. I do not mean that the mouse is an eagle, but if he knows that he is a mouse then this is something - perhaps he is a 'lucky' mouse' - see J. Cary, *Three Modern Italian Poets: Saba, Ungaretti, Montale* (second edition: Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p.326. West (op. cit., p.226) adds to this: 'I emphasise the continuing tension between hope and despair, positivity and negativity throughout Montale's poetry'.

9. G. Contini's 'Montale e *La bufera*' was first published in 1956 in *Letteratura*, 24. It is now included in his *Una lunga fedeltà* (Turin, Einaudi, 1974), pp.79-94. The quotation is taken from pages 82-85.
10. In 'Palio' (*Occasioni*) the poet had written: 'la morte non ha altra voce / di quella che sponde la vita' (vv.46-7, OV, 180 / TP, 188). Reality and unreality, life and death are, therefore, described as having identical characteristics. The quotation 'recto' and 'verso' is taken from 'Ho scritto un solo libro', an interview with G. Zampa, first published in *Il Giornale Nuovo*, 27 June 1975. See E. Montale, *Sulla poesia*, cit., pp.601-07.
11. See R. Riccobono, 'Lettura in limine di "La canna che dispiuma" e di "Fuscello teso dal muro" di Eugenio Montale', *The Italianist*, 14 (1994), pp.111-32.
12. For various interpretations of the poem 'In limine' see the following: M. Fabris, 'Lettura polimorfa di "In limine" di Montale', *Poesia italiana del '900. Una proposta didattica per la lettura del testo poetico*, edited by M. Mancini, M. Marchi and D. Marinari (Milan, Franco Angeli Editore, 1984), pp.100-20; M. Brose, 'The Spirit of the Sign: Oppositional Structures in Montale's *Ossi di Seppia*', *Stanford Italian Review*, 4 (1984), pp. 147-75; E. Giachery, *Metamorfosi dell'orto e altri scritti montaliani* (Rome: Bonacci Editore, 1985), pp. 9-47; R. Riccobono, 'Deixis and the dynamics of the relationship between text and reader in the poetry of Eugenio Montale', *Edinburgh Working Papers in Applied Linguistics*, 7 (1996), pp. 100-11.
13. Cambon has written of Montale's Bhuddism, referring to his tendency to dissolution into light or essences which have no concrete consistency. (See G. Cambon, *Eugenio Montale's Poetry*, cit., pp.4-5 and p.34). For example in 'Portami il girasole' (*Ossi di seppia*) 'Svanire / è dunque la ventura delle venture. / Portami tu la pianta che conduce / dove sorgono bionde trasparenze / e vapora la vita quale essenza' (vv.7-11, OV, 32 / TP, 34). In 'Mediterraneo', 9, the final lines (vv.22-23) read: 'Bene lo so: bruciare, / questo, non altro, è il mio significato'.
14. See R.J. West, 'Montale's *care ombre*', cit., p. 224.
15. For further information on the analysis of the Aristotelian term *entelechy* in connection with Montale's poetry see G. Cambon, *Eugenio Montale's Poetry*, cit., pp.110-11.
16. Cambon has dedicated a whole chapter of his book to 'the purgatorial syndrome' present in Montale's poetry: op. cit, pp.90-152.
17. Montale's father figure ('eccoti [...] padre, erto ai barbagli') reminds us of Dante's Farinata degli Uberti: "'Vedi là Farinata che s'è dritto: / dalla cintola in su tutto il vedrai". / Io aveva già il mio viso nel suo fitto; / ed el s'ergea col petto e con la fronte, / com'avesse l'inferno a gran dispetto', *Inferno*, X, vv.32-6. For a further note on Dante's Farinata and Montale's father see R.J West, 'Montale's *care ombre*', cit., p. 225.
18. For a further explanation of the metaphor of the 'fire' and 'love' see G. Savoca, 'L'ombra viva', in *La poesia di Eugenio Montale: Atti del Convegno Internazionale* (Milan/Genova, Librex, 1982), pp. 385-411 (392).
19. As the 'trusted shadow' has been compared to a Christ-figure, it is possible to refer lines 36-38 to Christ's temptations whilst in the desert. See *St Matthew*, 4, 1-11; *St Luke*, 4, 1-13.
20. Giancarlo Giacalone uses the term 'figura impleta' extensively in his commented edition of *La divina commedia* (Rome, Angelo Signorelli Editore, 1982).
21. In my 1994 article ('Lettura in limine di "La canna che dispiuma" e di "Fuscello teso dal muro" di Eugenio Montale', cit.), I approached the process of reading Montale's poetic texts as a rite of initiation of the reader-neophyte into the truthful reading of reality. The aspects which I analysed were the morphological and formal aspects of 'La canna che dispiuma' and the intertextual presence of

one or more texts at the origin of the Montalian poetic text 'Fuscello teso dal muro'. My conclusion was that Montale's poetic language assumes a metalingual function and that through the **break-down** and re-aggregation of the poetic text the reader-neophyte is guided by the poet-Shaman through the poetic universe in search of a reading to reality.

22. With the terms, 'death-in-life' and 'life-in-death' I refer to the concept introduced by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (1798).

APPENDIX VI

Published paper: ‘ “Il sogno del prigioniero”: heteroglossia as a sign of disaggregation’, in *Montale Readings*, ed. by É. P. Ó Ceallacháin and F. Pedriali (Glasgow: Glasgow University Press, 2000, forthcoming).

'Il sogno del prigioniero': heteroglossia as a sign of disaggregation

Rossella Riccobono

The purpose of this study is to analyse some aspects of heteroglossia in Montale's poetic language. Firstly, I shall consider some of the motivations for the study of heteroglossia in connection with poetry. I will then apply some of these considerations to Montale's poetry and to his use of poetic language. Finally, I shall focus on the text of 'Il sogno del prigioniero', a pivotal poem for understanding the poetic and linguistic changes which occur between Montale's first three books and the later production from *Satura* onwards.

Heteroglossia and poetic silence

The heteroglossic nature of language has been most fully explored by Mikhail Bakhtin in his theory of the novel in the 1930s.¹ Bakhtin studied in depth the origins of the novel and its language from Ancient Greek prototypes, where the language and the characters were monological, up to modern times, via its development during Roman times through to the Renaissance when, in his opinion, the elements of laughter and satire introduced heteroglossia and polyphony into the language of narrative. His affirmations on the subject spring from his belief that the language of a text is not to be seen as the creation of its author: language owns the author, who becomes a vehicle for it. When a word is uttered it brings with it all the semantic accents and intentions attached to it through all its previous utterances in different contexts. In this sense, each word has an internal dialogical nature which prevents it from having a single value. Language is the product of a whole society and its linguistic and social mechanisms are percolated through an author into a text. In this way, the linguistic orchestration of a text is partly a reflection of the social orchestration of language, partly an attempt by its author to unify the social centrifugal forces and give the text one meaning and shape.²

Whilst Bakhtin recognizes the language of the novel as heteroglossic, he fails to see that poetic language can abide

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by the same principles. Bakhtin defines the poetic genre as linguistically isolated from all other literary genres and the poetic word as independent from possible interaction with other discourses which can only be viewed as distant from and alien to that of poetry. Poetry is therefore considered as a self-sufficient genre:

The language of the poetic genre is a unitary and singular Ptolemaic world outside of which nothing else exists and nothing else is needed. The concept of many worlds of language, all equal in their ability to conceptualize and to be expressive, is organically denied to poetic style.³

According to Bakhtin not only is poetry an isolated genre within the social orchestration of language, but in times when the socio-political reality has become hostile, poetry undergoes a process of ossification: in other words the natural language of poetry is replaced by an 'artificial' one.⁴

What Bakhtin views as the ossification of poetry, or its change towards a more authoritarian and dogmatic style of poetic language, leads, at one extreme, to the silencing of poetry. Silence as a philosophical and political stand has been recognized as a rhetorical technique in the poetics of the twentieth century.⁵ Poetry in a hostile world finds itself incapable of expressing the surrounding reality. However, intentional silence as an extreme answer to a hostile socio-political situation finds its counterpart in another extreme, yet opposite reaction: the desecration and dispersal of the absolute value of the written word. Silence may, in a sense, be seen as an extreme form of logocentricity: it is non-fragmentary and absolute, a mirror of the absoluteness of divine *Logos*.⁶ On the other hand, the dispersal of the word and the diffusion of its meaning into multiple and polyphonic signifiers represent the socially heteroglossic ensemble of language. If purists of language search for the unitary, the logocentric and the priestly value of the word, heterogloss view language as a mirror of reality through which truth is linguistically 'divided up between endless mirror-images'.⁷ In this way it is clear that silence and heteroglossia are opposite but complementary phenomena, i.e. they underline opposite strategies by the author of the text, who needs however, in both cases, to find a way to express the inexpressible.

Silence, heteroglossia and disaggregation in Montale

The question of silence and the dispersal of the value of the word can be viewed as central in the poetry of Eugenio Montale, especially in the years intervening between the publication of *La bufera e altro* and the shaping of *Satura*. In the opening poem of *Satura*, 'Il tu' (OV, 275), a clear reference is made by Montale to a poetic persona and a reality which are broken down into endless mirror-images. This seems to furnish the reader with a clue on how to read the following poems in *Satura* and in later books. It should be remembered that *Satura* is the result of a long period of poetic silence and marks a change in technique and intonation in Montale's poetry.⁸ Montale's silence transforms itself into heteroglossic language and, ultimately, the adoption of heteroglossia as a writing device represents a need to *bavarder*, or to talk nonsense: to mimic the 'blabla / dell'alta società' ('Non ho mai capito se io fossi', OV, 285).

Bakhtin claims that:

languages of heteroglossia, like mirrors that face each other, each reflecting in its own way a piece, a tiny corner of the world, force us to guess at and grasp for a world behind their mutually reflecting aspects that is broader, more multi-leveled, containing more and varied horizons than would be available to a single language or a single mirror.⁹

In the same way, it is possible to say that Montale's language from *Satura* onwards becomes a mirror of the different aspects of reality and reflects a varied experience of the world which cannot be contained any longer by a monologic language, the language that the poet had struggled to keep together until *La bufera e altro* in order to find a unitary reading of reality. The dispersal of his attempted unitary language gives way to the disintegration of his poetic style and unity into a multitude of fragments which are typical of Montale's poetry in the later collections.¹⁰ This plurality of style and language reflects a polyphonic reality which lacks a central traditional meaning, a reality which is based on empty values and which can only be expressed by the language of nonsense.

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The poetry of a reality based on nothingness springs from the poet's closure towards the metaphysical dimension and from the dismissal of the awaited epiphanies which had characterized his poetry from the outset. It is the moment of passage from the earlier to the later style, from the 'primo Montale' to the 'secondo Montale' which is the focus for this study of heteroglossia in his language and of the disintegration of his poetic values. This moment of transition will be considered through the analysis of 'Il sogno del prigioniero'.

Montale's poetic *excursus* from *Ossi di seppia* to *Diario postumo* can be pictured as a path which turns dramatically with a hairpin bend at one point of its evolution, namely between *La bufera e altro* (1956) and *Satura* (1971). Montale describes the two periods of his poetry-writing as the *recto* and *verso* of the same experience.¹¹ Whilst the main thrust of the first three books involves a tension towards breaking free of spatio-temporal-historical barriers into a more or less metaphysical experience, the later production is characterized by a reworking of previous questions and metaphors, but with a rather sharp change of intonation. This 'ripiegamento' or 'ribaltamento' of his poetry is coupled with the use of a new poetic discourse which has been described by some critics as the sign of Montale's entrance into the hell of Nothingness.¹²

The publication of *Satura* follows a long poetic silence after *La bufera e altro*.¹³ With *La bufera*, the poetry of the first season of production reached a level of *saturation* which could only allow for either silence or a new kind of poetry, as *Satura* would show in the following years. The ten-year silence seems to have involved a radical re-think of his approach to poetic discourse and ends with a new type of poetry, partially in terms of theme, but especially in intonation. During an interview with Annalisa Cima in 1977, Montale points to a change in his 'musical' taste in his later production:

Quando scrivevo i primi libri non sapevo che avrei raggiunto gli ottanta anni. Passati gli anni, guardandoci dentro ho scoperto che si poteva fare altro, l'opposto anche. Poi c'è un fatto di orecchio musicale (i critici non ne tengono abbastanza conto): ho voluto suonare il pianoforte in un'altra maniera, più

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discreta, più silenziosa. Ma tutto è nato spontaneamente, non ho programmato nulla.¹⁴

As well as a need for musical change, Barile claims that Montale's need for *bavardage* springs from his obsessive vision of Nothingness around him and the instinctive desire to exorcize it:

non sembra azzardato ipotizzare una vicinanza dell'ultima fase poetica di Montale a quella importante zona della letteratura europea del secondo novecento la cui modalità consiste nel *bavardage*: quando la parola diventa urgente a colui che sospetta la propria inesistenza. Solo il *bavardage* enuncia, esorcizzandolo, il nulla che ha da dire, così come la «furiosa nomenclazione» di *Ossi*, secondo la nota lettura di Contini, esorcizzava con la parola lo «schermo di immagini» della realtà.¹⁵

The thin veil which separates silence from the poetry of *bavardage* is the object of my analysis in this study. In particular, I will show how Montale's language adopts a more heteroglossic accent, i.e. becomes less monologized. The embracing of heteroglossia following on from a more monologized poetic language may be interpreted as a sign of linguistic disintegration of his poetic universe.

From the time of *Ossi di seppia* the concept of reality is already connoted by disaggregation, a mere existing of objects next to each other kept together by invisible links and levers which Montale expects to fail and reveal the real nature of existence: reality is recognized as a co-existence of elements which are always 'pronti a disgiungersi in un crollo'.¹⁶ The aggregation of elements which form reality is at times described by the poet through a syntax of images which surprises the reader due to the complete lack of logical connections between such images.¹⁷ The technique of object-naming creates a vacuum around the poetic images with the result that they are perceived as naked presences out of any context and 'ammucchiate alla rinfusa come in un vecchio magazzino': seeking a connection between them is useless because there is no connection or meaning, and if there is one it is unknowable.¹⁸ The only possible way to a unitary reading of reality would be through the potential epiphanies so faithfully awaited all along the poetic path and those epiphanies, as Martelli has

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shown, can be seen to coincide with poetry itself. Poetry can be the means to find a meaning within the disintegration of reality.¹⁹ Nevertheless, such epiphanies are rare and are revealed by signs ('barbagli', 'lampo', 'folgore', 'sciacalli') which disappear as quickly as they appear.

If in the poetry from *Ossi* through to *La bufera* there may be identified a constant effort to safeguard the philosophical-soteric value of poetry in order to reach a unitary reading of reality, from *Satura* onwards, as Barile underlines, a new aspect of Montale's poetry emerges slowly: his tendency to 'accidia' or sloth. In 'L'immane farsa umana' (*Quaderno*) Montale declares his lack of interest in reality and his decision to find a refuge in the 'zona intermedia / che può chiamarsi inedia o accidia o altro' (*OV*, 596). This tendency to sloth turns into the total dissolution of the 'tu' (the intermediary between the 'io' and the 'absolute', i.e. the presence of a woman-angel) and finally into a total demolition of his previous images:

[...]
 Si dirà: sei colui che cadde dal predellino
 e disse poco male tanto dovevo scendere.
 Ma non è così facile distinguere
 discesa da caduta, cattiva sorte o mala.
 Ho tentato più volte di far nascere
 figure umane, angeli salvifici
 anche se provvisori; e se uno falliva
 né si reggeva più sul piedistallo
 pronta e immancabile anche la sostituita
 adusata alla parte per vocazione innata
 di essere il *doppio* sempre pronta al decollo
 alle prime avvisaglie e a volte tale
 da onnubilare dell'originale
 volto falcata riso pianto tutto
 ciò che conviene al calco più perfetto
 di chi sembrò vivente e fu nessuno.

(*'L'immane farsa umana'*, *OV*, 596)

The 'visiting angel' who had grown to be the necessary and only way of salvation from the 'logorio / di prima' ('Lontano, ero con te quando tuo padre', *OV*, 136) and even assumed a Christ-like role in *La bufera e altro*, is overturned completely in the derisory intonation: the difficult metaphysical flights, which the angel was at times

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not able to complete, are in 'L'immane farsa umana' taken over very easily and aped by a stunt angel. The poetic voice itself openly declares its own failure by admitting that the new kind of poetry is not characterized by a mere lowering ('discesa') but by an actual collapse ('caduta') of intonation. Demolishing the visiting angel is a metaphorical way of admitting the failure of his poetry in general. Montale's faith in poetry ('una fede che fu combattuta, / [...] una speranza che bruciò più lenta / di un duro ceppo nel focolare', 'Piccolo testamento', *OV*, 267) was what held his poetic language together despite the continuous peril of total disintegration. Once poetry fails, two extreme possibilities are open to Montale, namely silence or heteroglossia, i.e. the embracing by the poet of linguistic varieties which were previously excluded from his poetic language. Just as the technique of object-naming portrayed reality in its disintegrated nature by presenting objects which were unrelated by any possible link set next to each other, so, in some respects, embracing heteroglossia, or a variety of available social languages, can be seen as another way of showing the presence of various aspects of reality not always necessarily connected, but nevertheless juxtaposed and clashing with each other in socio-linguistic terms. The failure of poetry means that the only unitary means of reading reality is lost and disaggregation occurs within the text. From this moment on Montale's poetry consists of texts belonging to various different genres: aphorisms, telephone calls, syllogisms, and so on.²⁰ Linguistic registers include all possible fields: the language of the first three books is superseded by a more varied language and gives access to intonations which include the comic, the farcical, even the obscene (the so-called 'Montale fecale' or 'stercale') which co-exist alongside the survival of certain more classical forms used in previous years. From *Satura* onwards the 'blabla / dell'alta società' takes over as a technique: it is the apparently inane and meaningless use of language which becomes the only possible way to fill and disguise the frightful emptiness of reality.²¹ However, although Montale's new language can superficially give the impression of mere chattering or 'blabla', deep down it is charged with poignancy, brutal astuteness and courage to demolish everything and everybody starting from his own poetic self.

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Those ten years of silence between *La bufera* and *Satura* do leave a deep mark in the change of his language, intonation and philosophical-ideological outlook. However, there are also some signs present *a priori*, at the close of *La bufera*, which can be seen *a posteriori* to anticipate the poetic change. An examination of 'Il sogno del prigioniero' will show how this poem is a key text connecting the earlier to the later Montale.

Analysis of 'Il sogno del prigioniero'

Albe e notti qui variano per pochi segni.

Il zigzag degli storni sui battifredi
nei giorni di battaglia, mie sole ali,
un filo d'aria polare,
5 l'occhio del capoguardia dallo spioncino,
crac di noci schiacciate, un oleoso
sfrigolio dalle cave, girarrosti
veri o supposti - ma la paglia è oro,
la lanterna vinosa è focolare
10 se dormendo mi credo ai tuoi piedi.

La purga dura da sempre, senza un perché.
Dicono che chi abiura e sottoscrive
può salvarsi da questo sterminio d'ocche;
che chi obiurga se stesso, ma tradisce
15 e vende carne d'altri, afferra il mestolo
anzi che terminare nel *pâté*
destinato agl'Iddii pestilenziali.

Tardo di mente, piagato
dal pungente giaciglio mi sono fuso
20 col volo della tarma che la mia suola
sfarina sull'impiantito,
coi kimoni cangianti delle luci
sciorinate all'aurora dai torrioni,
ho annusato nel vento il bruciaticcio
25 dei buccellati dai forni,
mi son guardato attorno, ho suscitato
iridi su orizzonti di ragnateli
e petali sui tralicci delle inferriate,
mi sono alzato, sono ricaduto
30 nel fondo dove il secolo è il minuto -

e i colpi si ripetono ed i passi,

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e ancora ignoro se sarò al festino
farcitore o farcito. L'attesa è lunga,
il mio sogno di te non è finito.

(OV, 268)

The theme is that of the dream, a theme which Montale had already used in his previous poems.²² Savoca in his concordance of Montale's poems records 39 examples of lexemes such as 'sogno', 'sognare' and 'sognatore' and most of the occurrences are from *Satura* onwards, only 13 of these altogether occur in *Ossi*, *Occasioni* and *La bufera*.²³ The theme of the dream is therefore one which is present from the beginning of Montale's poetic activity, but comes to the fore in the later period of production. The theme of the poem, however, is not simply that of dream, but of a 'prisoner's dream'. Although lexemes such as 'prigione' and 'prigioniero' only occur 8 times within the whole body of Montale's poetry, the metaphor of the prison is closely connected to other metaphors of claustrophobic places where the poetic voice is effectively imprisoned. In *Ossi* we find, for example, 'la rete / che ci stringe' and the 'erto muro' of 'In limine' (OV, 5); the 'muraglia / che ha in cima cocci aguzzi di bottiglia' of 'Merigiare pallido e assorto' (OV, 28); in *Occasioni* the 'gabbia o cappelliera?' of 'A Liuba che parte' (OV, 123) and 'le mura pesanti che non s'aprono' of 'Carnevale di Gerti' (OV, 120). Thus, in 'Il sogno del prigioniero' the reader is dealing with themes which belong to Montale's poetic universe since the time of *Ossi di seppia*.

In the first line of 'Il sogno del prigioniero' the spatio-temporal co-ordinates of the poetic discourse are set, the time being an everlasting present and the space being the prison: 'Albe e notti qui variano per pochi segni'. The prison is described as a place where time seems to have stopped, where there is very little difference left between night and day, between sleep and waking, or between dream and reality.²⁴ If night and day, dream and reality are hardly distinguishable within Montale's prison, the themes of dream and reality-prison are also only distinguishable by few linguistic signs within the economy of the text.

The prison is never mentioned directly, but is referred to by metonymy: 'i battifredi' (l. 2), 'i giorni di battaglia' (l. 3), 'l'occhio del capoguardia dallo spioncino' (l. 5). 'Il zigzag degli storni sui battifredi / nei giorni di battaglia' (ll.

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2-3) is an interesting variant of the motif of flight, which in Montale's earlier poetry had always been connected to angels or birds and was associated primarily with the various metaphysical flights experienced by Clizia-Iride. Firstly there is the strongly marked lexical choice of 'zigzag', introducing a very different register and tone to that of Clizia's 'voli' (similar choices of vocabulary and tone occur throughout the later collections).²⁵ This term is then inserted into the overall image-complex of 'battifredi...giorni di battaglia', characterizing this new jerky flight in strongly negative terms. Furthermore, the flight is that of a group, a flock, reminiscent perhaps more of the collective 'formicaio' (for which Montale has such contempt -- see 'Botta e risposta II') than of the exceptional, redemptive 'voli' of Clizia. Now, however, such an impoverished, perhaps even sinister flight represents 'mie sole ali' (l. 3). (One might also compare the image used here to the implied flight of the angel of damnation, the 'ombroso Lucifero' of this poem's companion piece, 'Piccolo testamento') There is also a sense of the mechanical, the automated, in the starlings' zigzag movement. Previously, flight had symbolized the only possibility of escape from contingency, 'la rete / che ci stringe', to the ataraxy of 'il falco alto levato' ('Spesso il male di vivere ho incontrato', *OV*, 33) or the metaphysical journey in search of the sign of 'Ti libero la fronte dai ghiaccioli' (*OV*, 144). On the other hand, jerky, mechanical movements such as the rhythm of the train ('Presti anche tu alla fioca / litania del tuo rapido quest'orrida / e fedele cadenza di carioca?', 'Addii, fischi nel buio, cenni, tosse', *OV*, 137), the departure of the 'funicolare' in 'Il fiore che ripete' (*OV*, 148) and the 'mugghio dei battelli a ruote' ('Lindau', *OV*, 115) were metaphors for the imprisonment of man as an automaton within the mechanical and unidirectional flow of time. Flight and the mechanical element were in fact opposite and irreconcilable metaphors: 'il tardo frullo / di un piccione incapace di seguirti / sui gradini automatici che ti slittano in giù...' ('Di un natale metropolitano', *OV*, 224). In 'Il sogno del prigioniero' the two metaphors are still opposed to each other, but unnaturally re-united and recognizable in the same image, that of the 'zigzag degli storni sui battifredi / nei giorni di battaglia'. Furthermore, the metaphor of flight loses its transcendent value and, in the third stanza, is dragged down

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towards the ground ('mi sono fuso / col volo della tarma che la mia suola / sfarina sull'impiantito', ll. 19-21).

Meanwhile, the metaphor of imprisonment is enriched by the use of vocabulary and images belonging to the kitchen which are developed alongside those of 'il sogno'. Images connected to the 'kitchen' start infiltrating into Montale's poetry from *Occasioni*: namely in 'Dora Markus' and in 'Notizie dall'Amiata'. In 'Dora Markus' a first reference is made to 'gemiti d'ocche' (OV, 126) which will return in 'Il sogno del prigioniero' as part of the metaphor of the degenerated kitchen where the 'gemiti' become a worrying 'sterminio d'ocche' (l. 13) destined to produce 'pâté' (l. 16). In 'Dora Markus' it is then possible to trace the origins of the metaphor of the kitchen (consider also 'l'alloro della cucina', l. 55) which runs through *La bufera e altro* and reaches its climax in 'Il sogno del prigioniero'.²⁶ It is the presence of new and varied realities within Montale's metaphors (which were highly symbolical and powerfully defined in his earlier poetry), the joining of the solemn with the vulgar in his metaphors and vocabulary which suggests the opening up of Montale's language to a more heteroglossic style. Such a style can be seen to represent, in part, a reflection of the linguistic orchestration of society: the use of solemn poetic vocabulary directly related to Montale's previous production ('mie sole ali', l. 3; 'focolare', l. 9; 'volo', l. 20; 'iridi', l. 27; 'sogno', l. 34; lexemes which in their turn are connected to the Italian and European literary-biblical tradition), appears mixed in degrees with everyday and common language belonging to the environment of the prison and the kitchen: 'battifredi' (l. 2), 'capoguardia...spioncino' (l. 5), 'torrioni' (l. 23), 'inferriate' (l. 28), 'crac di noci' (l. 6), 'oleoso / sfrigolio' (ll. 6-7), 'girarrosti' (l. 7), 'afferra il mestolo' (l. 15), 'pâté' (l. 16), 'bruciaticcio / dei buccellati' (ll. 24-25). It is clear that Montale's poetic language adopted from *Ossi di seppia* up until *La bufera* has reached a final level of *saturation* and can no longer express on its own the abominable reality which surrounds the poet: the 'vene / di salnitro e di muffa' which were the sign of an incipient process of rotting in 'Notizie dall'Amiata' (OV, 181) have, by the end of *La bufera*, invaded the whole existential and historical scenario described by Montale's poetry and along with it his poetic language too. Embracing heteroglossic language

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becomes a possible way to replace what rot has destroyed.²⁷

In previous poems the spatio-temporal dimensions associated with the area beyond the here-and-now were connoted as part of a metaphysical existence outside reality, perhaps more real and positive than reality itself.²⁸ In 'Il sogno del prigioniero' the space beyond the here-and-now, i.e. the space outside the prison, is connoted by more sinister images of a mediaeval kitchen. These images are not the 'sempreverde / alloro per la cucina' of 'Dora Markus' (OV, 126), where the bay-leaves were already a sign of resistance to the 'lago d'indifferenza' and the 'fede feroce' of the pre-war times; or the 'arnesi da cucina / lillipuziani' (OV, 120), the product of Gerti's imagination. They suggest a rather degraded kind of kitchen where the 'crac di noci schiacciate' (l. 6), 'un oleoso / sfrigolio dalle cave' (l. 6-7) and 'i girarrosti / veri o supposti' (l. 7-8) can be very easily interpreted as farcical-grotesque references to human tortures, to Stalin's Purges which were taking place in those years, or to the horrors of Hitler's death-camps.²⁹ The internal rhyme 'girarrosti-supposti' gives the line a darkly comical effect, underlining even more the grotesque element.

In line 8 a specific sign activates the second metaphorical dimension which runs parallel to that of imprisonment, namely, that of dream: a long hyphen separates lines 2-8a from 8b-10, thus dividing the *endecasillabo* into a *quinario* and a *settenario*. In lines 8b-10 the reader witnesses a sudden return to the images of salvation which were offered by the evocation of Clizia-Iride in previous poems: 'la paglia è oro, / la lanterna vinosa è focolare / se dormendo mi credo ai tuoi piedi' (ll. 8b-10).³⁰ This is the prisoner's dream, the only dimension where the cold prison can turn into a place of intense personal authenticity and the frightful signs which connote the reality outside the prison can be forgotten. The long hyphen can be seen to correspond to one of the 'pochi segni' (l. 1) if interpreted as a linguistic-formal sign which marks the difference between 'veglia' and 'sogno'.

Thus, the spatial co-ordinate 'qui' (l. 1) is opposed to a space beyond the prison wall/door/'spioncino' connoted as negative and grotesque, but is now also opposed to the dimension of dream. The binary opposition becomes a

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threefold one where reality is opposed to the dimension of nightmare (i.e. the space beyond the prison door) as well as to that of dream. If the dream dimension is the safest of the three, the dimension of reality, the 'qui', translated into a mere waiting 'l'attesa è lunga' (l. 33), assumes relatively positive connotations if compared to previous instances in Montale's poetry where 'qui' was the claustrophobic garden which imprisoned the poetic voice and the various addressees. An acceptance of the here-and-now dimension becomes plausible, but the only real activity left to the prisoner is now that of waiting and dreaming, if trying to escape from the prison means 'abiurare e sottoscrivere' (l. 12), 'tradire / e vendere carne d'altri' (ll. 14-15), 'afferrare il mestolo' (l. 15) or else 'terminare nel *pâté* / destinato agli Iddii pestilenziali' (ll. 16-17): in other words, embracing the surrounding dimension of nightmare.

The only way to escape from the metaphorical prison is through dream. The prison becomes the only possible space where existence is understood as a long wait before the inevitable choice must be made, but the prison also becomes a metaphor for the 'accidia' or the non-choice for which Montale can be seen to opt, not as a sign of cowardice but as a sign of spiritual and personal freedom if the choice is either to be 'farcitore' or 'farcito'.

Dreaming of Clizia introduces an element of hope within a reality of imprisonment and fear and, like all vivid dreams, blurs the boundaries of reality. The dimensions of dream and reality are clearly separated in the first two stanzas: in the first stanza the hyphen in line 8 signals explicitly the shift from reality to dream, while the break between the first and second stanzas marks the return to the very negative dimension of reality. In the third stanza, however, they blend together to describe an existential situation where it is no longer possible to discriminate between what is dreamt and what is not. The prisoner in his physical and spiritual suffering, dreams of fusing (or confusing?) his existence with the flight of the moth, the insect which he stamps on his prison floor with his foot. His desperate growing one with a moth creates an image which is far from those of the previous winged angels and much closer to the Mosca-insect in *Satura*. However dwarfing a fusion with an insect can be, the moth can fly and that is enough to allow the jump from reality to dream, to confuse the light reflected on window spaces at dawn

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with 'kimoni cangianti', to smell 'buccellati' from the ovens (instead of the smell of human flesh?), to conjure 'iridi su orizzonti di ragnateli / e petali sui tralicci delle inferriate' (ll. 27-28). The leap to the dream dimension, however, is short and landing back in reality is inevitable.

The whole progress of the poem is summarized in the metaphor of the moth which leaps into flight only to be soon knocked to the floor and smeared to dust: the text traces a moral, psychological and linguistic parabola. The metaphors deployed in the text create images which attempt flight, but inevitably fall back to the grotesque. The alternation of traditional and new vocabulary and images which refer to 'albe e notti' and to the theme of 'sogno' and 'veglia' are woven all through the text until the end and create a texture of highly heteroglossic *chiaroscuro*. If in the first and second stanzas the images connoting dream, nightmare and reality-prison are juxtaposed and still separated by formal signs, in the third stanza they are merged into a new style: the 'kimoni cangianti' (l. 22) are associated to 'torrioni' (l. 23), 'iridi' (l. 27) are conjured on 'ragnateli' (l. 27) and 'petali' (l. 28) are watched growing on the prison bars. The new dimension of dream-prison-nightmare contains all images blended together as can only happen in dreams and even the metaphor of food 'il bruciatuccio / dei buccellati dai forni' (ll. 24-25) appears in it mitigated, yet still retaining its sinister value included in the combination of the verb 'ho annusato' (l. 24) and the noun 'bruciatuccio' (l. 24).

The different metaphors and intonations in the third stanza are woven together to form a new style of poetry. Space remains the same, but time takes on an obsessive rhythm: no longer the beat of the 'tempo che ti batte al polso' of 'Carnevale di Gerti', the movement of the sundial of 'Fuscello teso dal muro', or one of the hellish dances so often used by the poet in previous poems, dances which had a real *tempo*, the various 'carioche', 'sardane', 'sarabande' and so forth. Time is now measured by the 'zigzag degli storni sui battifredi' (l. 2), by the sounds of 'crac di noci schiacciate' (l. 6), 'sfrigolio dalle cave' (l. 7) and 'colpi che si ripetono ed i passi' (l. 31). Such unusual, sinister visual and aural signals reaching the prisoner from the reality outside the prison are the only parameters available to know that time has not stopped. However, it is impossible for the prisoner to measure whether the silence between

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such signals lasts a minute or a century. The concept of time is still functioning, but its boundaries are blurred (just like the boundaries between dream and reality) and existence becomes a wait. The image of loss of time boundaries is a recurring one and it is directly connected to the theme of dissolution of time. However, the confusion between the century and the minute is highly negative if the length of a minute in the prison resembles that of a century. It is no longer the image of 'eternità d'istante' ('La bufera') where the surrounding apocalyptic-biblical style enhances the metaphysical value of the temporal image: 'il lampo che candisce / alberi e muri e li sorprende in quella / eternità d'istante - marmo manna / e distruzione' (OV, 189). In 'Il sogno del prigioniero' the confusion of the temporal limitations has no connection with any upward or transcendent metaphysical movement in the poem. Quite the contrary. The confusion between century and minute is the result of a downfall from a final attempt at metaphysical flight to the bottom of the prison: 'ho suscitato / iridi su orizzonti di ragnateli / e petali sui tralicci delle inferriate, / mi sono alzato, sono ricaduto / nel fondo dove il secolo è il minuto' (ll. 26-30).

Coupled with the downward movement of the style and the images, it is possible to witness a general sliding by the poetic persona towards sloth, where a minute and a century mean the same, where nothing means anything any longer. 'L'attesa è lunga' (l. 33) and the poetic persona's lethargy (it is almost possible to talk about 'ignavia' in this case) characterizes the closing lines of this poem: the prisoner is literally on the verge of Hell, but sloth as a final resort is still accompanied by hope ('il mio sogno di te non è finito', l. 34). Being able and free to dream, detaching oneself from a frightful reality, is all that is left of 'una speranza che bruciò più lenta / di un duro ceppo nel focolare' ('Piccolo testamento', OV, 267). Despite the extreme, inhuman condition depicted in the closing poem of *La bufera e altro*, there can be seen a final effort to hold on to a dream, to a possible awaited epiphany, if it is permissible to connect the closing line of 'Il sogno del prigioniero' with the closing lines of 'Piccolo testamento' where the signs are still recognized and read: 'Il tenue bagliore strofinato / laggiù non era quello di un fiammifero' (OV, 267).

In conclusion, while most of Montale's poetry can, to some extent, be seen to present a tendency towards

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linguistic disaggregation, in 'Il sogno del prigioniero' the lowering of the intonation and the introduction of farcical-grotesque metaphors and images and of vocabulary belonging to fields other than traditional poetic language bring the Montalian text to a further degree of disintegration, not only linguistic but also moral and psychological. It is possible to say that the language adopted in this poem is heteroglossic to a higher degree than Montale's previous poetry: there is a constant tendency to drop completely to the grotesque level, but at the same time one cannot but feel the presence of a constant effort to preserve the old images which are the only hope left to the prisoner. It is the presence of these levels, the *chiaroscuro* of grotesque and hopeful that hold together the poem.

It has been seen that out of the two stylistic and thematic components within 'Il sogno del prigioniero' (the grotesque and the hopeful, reality and possible epiphanies) which oppose and attract each other in the first two stanzas, a new style is created in the third stanza which contains both vulgar and hopeful and which anticipates some of the later poetry from *Satura* onwards. 'Il sogno del prigioniero' represents the final stage of the first forty years of Montale's production and an anticipation of what will be the style of the 'secondo Montale'. It is a pivotal text around which Montale's poetic universe can be seen to revolve, and which shows us that his new poetry is solidly rooted in his past poetic experience: 'un testo-cerniera' which separates but also holds together his production if we are to accept Montale's words 'ho scritto un solo libro'.³¹

Notes

¹ For Bakhtin's pioneering analysis of the heteroglossic nature of the language of the novel see some of the most significant of his writings: M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays*, ed. by M. Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981); M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*, trans. by R. W. Rotsel (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1973); M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by H. Iswolsky (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1984); M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. by V. W. McGee, ed. by C. Emerson and M. Holquist (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1986). Despite the fact that Bakhtin's works were written in the 1930s, they were published only from the 1970s.

² The term heteroglossia refers to the presence of the different levels of contextual significance attached to language which determine its dialogical nature. In this sense, language is the continually changing product of a whole society, nation or culture and it cannot be framed and crystallized as a unitary phenomenon of abstract categories. Heteroglossia (the Russian 'raznorechie' which means 'different-speech-ness') refers to the conflict between 'centrifugal' and 'centripetal', 'official' and 'unofficial' discourses within the same language. Bakhtin defines heteroglossia as the 'base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance. It is that which insures the primacy of context over text' (M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 428).

³ M. Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 259-420 (pp. 285-86).

⁴ Bakhtin was writing in the years following the Russian Revolution and leading to the brutalities of Communism when the choice of silence was the only option for the Russian intelligentsia who opposed the regime. With 'artificial language' Bakhtin refers to the choice made by the Russian Symbolists and Futurists to use a poetic language which was essentially non-communicative (a way of almost touching Silence) as opposed to prose writers who showed interest in the different dialects socially available. (See Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', pp. 287-88) Geyer-Ryan hypothesizes that the hardening of the language of poetry is directly dependent on the dynamics of the historical development of the concept of both poetry and the poet: 'When Bakhtin was writing, the novel had developed to make use of heteroglossia in the fullest sense [...]. It is possible that being a much more personal genre, poetry is only just beginning to universalize the strategies of 'low' and 'comic' sub-genres.' See H. Geyer-Ryan, 'Heteroglossia in the poetry of

Bertolt Brecht and Tony Harrison', in *The taming of the Text*, ed. by W. Van Peer (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 193-221 (p. 219).

⁵ Silence as a form of 'expression', from the aesthetic point of view, can be traced back to the second half of the nineteenth century in Mallarmé's drama of the inexpressible, the blank page. In the twentieth century however, the issue of silence acquires a more philosophical/political depth: consider Adorno's statement that after Auschwitz there could no longer be poetry, or Steiner's denunciation of modern writers' tendency to logorrhoea, whereby the authentic word finds it difficult to emerge amongst the worthless proliferation of language. Montale himself declares, with characteristic irony, that among the reasons for his years of poetic silence is 'l'inflazione poetica che mi ha intimidito. Essendo presenti sul campo migliaia di poeti nuovi pensavo che bisognasse cedere il proprio posto a loro'. See T. W. Adorno, 'Lirik und Gesellschaft' in *Noten zur Literatur I* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1958), p. 92; G. Steiner, 'Silence and the poet', in *Language and Silence. Essays 1958-66*, ed. by G. Steiner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), pp. 57-76 (pp. 75-76); E. Montale, 'Queste le ragioni del mio lungo silenzio. Dialogo con E. M.', now in *SMAMS*, pp. 1622-30 (p. 1622).

⁶ As Steiner explains, the term 'logocentricity' refers to the Neoplatonic and Johannine metaphor 'in the beginning was the Word', where the *Logos*, the essence of God, the act that creates, truth and total communication, has little in common with human speech, which creates too, but is fragmentary and represents a disaggregation of the absolute *Logos*: the ruins of the Tower of Babel and the remains of the torn Orpheus are all results of the Gods' anger towards 'the miraculous outrage of human speech'. But if man's word is only a fragment of the totality of God's Word, then silence can be construed as a step towards the totality of *Logos* (Steiner, pp. 55-56).

⁷ H. Geyer-Ryan, 1988, p. 201.

⁸ See: U. Carpi, *Montale dopo il fascismo dalla "Bufera" a "Satura"* (Padua: Liviana Editrice, 1971); M. A. Grignani, '«Satura»: da miscellanea a libro', in *Prologhi ed epiloghi* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1987), pp. 117-37.

⁹ M. Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', pp. 414-15.

¹⁰ I use the term 'poetic unity' in the same sense as Bakhtin does when he states that: 'in poetic genres, artistic consciousness—understood as a unity of all the author's semantic and expressive intentions—fully realizes itself within its own language'. In this sense, poetic unity refers to the complete attempt to own language by an author, to subdue language so that it can become 'an obedient organ, fully adequate to the author's intention' ('Discourse in the Novel', p. 285-6).

¹¹ E. Montale, 'Ho scritto un solo libro', interview ed. by G. Zampa, (1975), now in *SMAMS*, pp. 1720-25 (p. 1724).

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¹² See G. Cambon, *Eugenio Montale's Poetry: A Dream in Reason's Presence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 244; L. Barile, *Adorate mie larve. Montale e la poesia anglosassone* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990), p. 110.

¹³ 'Piccolo testamento' and 'Il sogno del prigioniero', the former written in 1953 and the latter in 1954, were placed as provisional conclusions at the end of Montale's third book. Afterwards, the following 10 years are marked by a striking poetic silence from Montale, with the exception of the publication of the *plquette* in 1962 which contained the unpublished newly-composed 'Botta e risposta I', 'Ventaglio per S.F.' and three other poems written in the 1920s (see Grignani, 1987, p. 117). He resumes poetic activity in earnest in 1964 with the composition of the first 'Xenia' poems.

In an interview with Bruno Rossi in 1962, Montale states some of the reasons for the long silence between the publication of *La bufera e altro* and the 1962 *plquette*: 'Non c'è un solo motivo. Ci sono molti motivi. Prima di tutto ho avuto l'impressione che avendo già pubblicato tre libri, che sono in definitiva tre parti della stessa autobiografia, potevo anche tacere, perché avevo già detto tutto l'essenziale' ('Queste le ragioni del mio lungo silenzio. Dialogo con E. M.', now in *SMAMS*, pp. 1622-30 (p. 1622)). Montale in this interview prefers not to comment on other possible reasons which caused his poetic commitment to come to a natural pause for at least seven years. An important factor in his withdrawal from poetry-writing and from political (but not moral) commitment is that of his disillusionment with the years following the Second World War, Resistance and the 'dopoguerra' which Montale had hoped would re-instate pre-Fascist democratic and bourgeois-liberal values. See 'Dialogo con Montale sulla poesia' (1960), now in *SMAMS*, pp. 1601-10 (p. 1602).

¹⁴ A. Cima, 'Le reazioni di Montale', in *Profilo di un autore. Eugenio Montale*, ed. by A. Cima and C. Segre (Milan: Rizzoli, 1977), pp. 192-93.

¹⁵ L. Barile, 1990, p. 98.

¹⁶ 'Volli cercare il male / che tarla il mondo, la piccola stortura / d'una leva che arresta / l'ordigno universale; e tutti vidi / gli eventi del minuto / come pronti a disgiungersi in un crollo' ('Mediterraneo', 7, *OV*, 57).

¹⁷ Consider, for example, 'Gli orecchini' where the images chosen 'si compongono in un tutto organico solo *a posteriori*. Radunare più oggetti che, presi ad uno ad uno, presentano un volto familiare (uno specchio, una spugna, delle pietre, coleotteri, e, più in là, meduse e mani), e ricavare dall'insieme un non so che di "ricco e di strano", come se insomma ci si rendesse conto per la prima volta che la realtà consiste in un aggregato di cose sprovvisto di qualsiasi giustificazione logica.' See D. S. Avallé, '“Gli orecchini” di Montale', in *Tre saggi su Montale* (Turin: Einaudi, 1970), pp. 35-90 (p. 61). 'Keepsake', 'Il

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ramarro se scocca', 'La canna che dispiuma' (and in general most of the *Mottetti*), 'Finestra fiesolana', 'Botta e risposta I' are some other examples of texts where the syntax of images presents no spatial, temporal or logical connections. For further reference to illogical and disintegrative text construction in Montale see also E. Graziosi, 'Il tempo delle *Occasioni*: una sintassi tematica', *Lingua e Stile*, 7, 1 (1972), 505-32.

¹⁸ D. S. Avalle, 'Dalla letteratura al mito', in *Profilo di un autore. Eugenio Montale*, pp. 124-33 (p. 126).

¹⁹ See M. Martelli, *Il rovescio della poesia: interpretazioni montaliane* (Milan: Longanesi, 1977), pp. 9-27; M. Brose, 'The Spirit of the Sign: Oppositional Structures in Montale's "Ossi di Seppia"', *Stanford Italian Review*, 4 (1984), 147-75.

²⁰ The only sections which can be seen to still bear some characteristics of a unitary 'canzoniere' are Xenia I and II, where the figure of the dead Mosca still tries to act as a link between the poet and the absolute. However, the stature and the philosophical flights of Mosca are clearly insect-like if compared to the previous figures of Clizia and Iride.

²¹ Barile has drawn a parallel between the poetry of Montale and Samuel Beckett's plays. Despite the fact that Montale did not appreciate Beckett's theatre, his poetry during the years of *Satura* and later seems to have a similar response to reality. This is the way Barile introduces her studies on Beckett's influence on Montale: 'A Niklaus Gessner che gli chiedeva perché continuare a scrivere se il Nulla e il Vuoto e l'Incomunicabile erano i suoi temi, Beckett rispose: "Que voulez vous, Monsieur? C'est les mots; on n'a rien d'autre". La disintegrazione del linguaggio come possibilità di comunicazione è il punto in cui la via di Beckett incontra quella di Montale' (Barile, 1990, pp. 113-14).

²² 'Il sogno è questo: un vasto, / interminato giorno che rifonde / tra gli argini, quasi immobile, il suo bagliore / e ad ogni svolta il buon lavoro dell'uomo, / il domani velato che non fa orrore. / E altro ancora era il sogno' ('Barche sulla marna', *OV*, 173); 'S'accese sui pomi cotogni, / un punto, una cocciniglia, / si udì inalberarsi alla striglia / il poney — e poi vinse il sogno' ('Nella serra', *OV*, 241). In the notes to a special edition of *Finisterre* (Florence: Barbera, 1945), Montale describes 'Iride' as dreamt poetry: 'È una poesia che ho sognato e trascritto; ne sono forse più il medium che l'autore' (*OV*, 962).

²³ G. Savoca, *Concordanza di tutte le poesie di Eugenio Montale* (Firenze: Olschki, 1987).

²⁴ Barile underlines a Plotinian influence on Montale's indication of the zone between 'veglia' and 'sonno' as the place where poetry is conceived: 'In tale stato di incoscienza-cosciente, opposto all'io cosciente dell'idealismo, può esprimersi quella parte universale (il «tu», l'Assoluto che è plotinianamente il nostro essere profondo) che è nell'individuo' (Barile, 1990, pp. 106-7).

²⁵ Clizia's flights start to be replaced by mechanical flights in texts earlier than 'Il sogno del prigioniero'. Consider, for example, 'Gli orecchini' where the opening lines announce Clizia's disappearance: 'Non serba ombra di voli il nerofumo / della spera. (E del tuo non è più traccia)'; and where line 9 underlines the presence of a quite different kind of flight: 'Ronzano èltre fuori' (OV, 194). Montale explains in a letter to Silvio Guarnieri dated 29 November 1965 that 'le èltre sono gli aerei di guerra visti come funesti insetti' (See L. Greco, *Montale commenta Montale* (Parma: Pratiche Editrice, 1980), p. 46). George Kay translates 'Il zigzag degli storni' in 'Il sogno del prigioniero' as 'The zigzagging of formations': this probably derives from the presence of the variant 'stormi' for 'storni' in the first two editions of the collection (1956 and 1957). It seems most likely however that this was a printing error, as the variant was not present on the original publication of the poem in *Il ponte* in 1954 (see OV, 971). See E. Montale, *Selected Poems*, trans. by G. Kay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1964), p. 115. It is interesting to note, however, that the image of starlings in formation returns later, in *Quaderno*: 'Passano in formazioni romboidali / velocissimi altissimi gli storni / visti e scomparsi in un baleno / così fitti / che non c'è punto di luce / in quel rombo' ('Da un taccuino', OV, 557).

²⁶ 'Notizie dall'Amiata' anticipates and combines the images of the kitchen and those of rot which later, in *La bufera e altro* and *Satura*, turn into images of animal and human waste. In the description of the poet's room, 'la cellula di miele / di una sfera lanciata nello spazio' (OV, 181) the 'travature / tarlate' and the 'sentore di meloni' could be easily interpreted as images of sweetness: the over-sweet smell of melons is, in fact, that of rotting melons, which together with the veins of saltpetre and moulds and the breaking straw ('disfà' also in the sense of 'decaying') become the main images of the poem. Furthermore, 'Notizie dall'Amiata' contains the desecration of the poetic image of the fireplace: the fireplace, the site of a possible epiphany, if epiphany is connected to images of light and fire, loses its absolute value and is turned into a chestnut roaster ('il focolare / dove i marroni esplodono').

²⁷ In 'Il sogno del prigioniero' the presence of heteroglossia is less marked than in later poetry, however it may be noted that terms which belong strictly to the vocabulary of the kitchen and to the field of mediaeval (therefore more grotesque) warfare clash with each other within the same context: 'girarrosti' (l. 7), 'pâté' (l. 16), 'buccellati' (l. 25), 'farcito' (l. 33); 'battifredi' (l. 2) and 'torrioni' (l. 23). Furthermore, the word 'pâté' is set in italics and therefore seen as a foreign presence, i.e. socially marked. 'Botta e risposta I' (OV, 276) presents a more mature stage of heteroglossic poetry: in the first part of the poem a strictly philosophical term is deployed 'epoché' (l. 7) and set in italics, underlining the extraneous presence within the poetic context and highlighting the clash with the vocabulary adopted in the

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following stanza. In the second part of 'Botta e risposta I' vocabulary connected to the stable ('letame', l. 7; 'muggiti', l. 9; 'forconi', l. 13) and grotesquely interwoven with terms of cookery ('stracolmi imbuti', l. 12; 'spiedi', l. 13; 'un'infilzata fetida / di saltimbocca', l. 13-14) clashes once again with terms belonging to mediaeval warfare: 'la geldra' (l. 11, from Old French 'gelde' and Provençal 'gelda' which meant 'troop'), 'bastioni' (l. 17), 'bargelli del brago' (l. 31) and 'presentat-arm' (l. 12, which is specifically modern military jargon).

²⁸ Examples of texts where a metaphysical dimension is described as perhaps more authentic than reality are numerous: in the opening poem of *Ossi*, 'In limine', the poetic voice explicitly introduces reality as 'la rete / che ci stringe' (OV, 5) and urges the addressee to escape from the garden of life in search of a more positive dimension: 'se procedi t'imbatti / tu forse nel fantasma che ti salva' and 'cerca una maglia rotta nella rete / che ci stringe, tu balza fuori, fuggi!'. Other poems where reference is made to such a dimension are 'I limoni' ('l'anello che non tiene/ il filo da disbrogliare che finalmente ci metta/ nel mezzo di una verità', OV, 9), 'Casa sul mare' ('Penso che per i più non sia salvezza, / ma taluno sovverta ogni disegno, / passi il varco, qual volle si ritrovi', OV, 91), 'Carnevale di Gerti' ('hai ritrovato / forse la strada che tentò un istante / il piombo fuso a mezzanotte quando / finì l'anno tranquillo senza spari', OV, 120).

²⁹ Montale talked about a double interpretation of the prisoner in 'Il sogno del prigioniero': 'Il mio prigioniero può essere un prigioniero politico; ma può essere *anche* prigioniero della condizione esistenziale. Ambiguità, *in questo caso*, necessaria alla poesia'. See 'Dialogo con Montale sulla poesia', *SMAMS*, p. 1603. Carpi, in keeping with Montale's comment, suggests that interpreting the image of Lucifer in 'Piccolo testamento' and that of the pestilential Gods in 'Il sogno del prigioniero' *sic et simpliciter* as respectively literary masks of communism and a Stalin-Moloch means simplifying the poetic richness of those texts. However, at the same time, it is necessary to keep in mind a double interpretation of those images without excluding totally and *a priori* the historical dimension from 'Conclusioni provvisorie': 'Ho cercato di mostrare come le più rilevate immagini delle *Conclusioni provvisorie* non siano gratuite e sia pur suggestive invenzioni di una fantasia eccitata, ma al contrario la coerente conclusione di una lunga e complessa esperienza storico-politica' (Carpi, *Montale dopo il fascismo*, p. 82).

³⁰ Hyphens are used elsewhere in Montale's poetry, to separate two different realities formally within the poetic-linguistic context: 'S'accese sui pomi cotogni, / un punto, una cocciniglia, / si udì inalberarsi alla striglia / il poney — e poi vinse il sogno' ('Nella serra', OV, 241); 'se si sfolla la strada e ti conduce / in un mondo soffiato entro una tremula / bolla d'aria e di luce dove il sole / saluta la tua grazia — hai ritrovato / forse la strada che tentò un istante / il piombo

Riccobono: 'Il sogno del prigioniero'

fuso a mezzanotte quando / finì l'anno tranquillo senza spari'
(*'Carnevale di Gerti'*, *OV*, 120).

³¹ See 'Ho scritto un solo libro', in *SMAMS*, pp. 1720-25.

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